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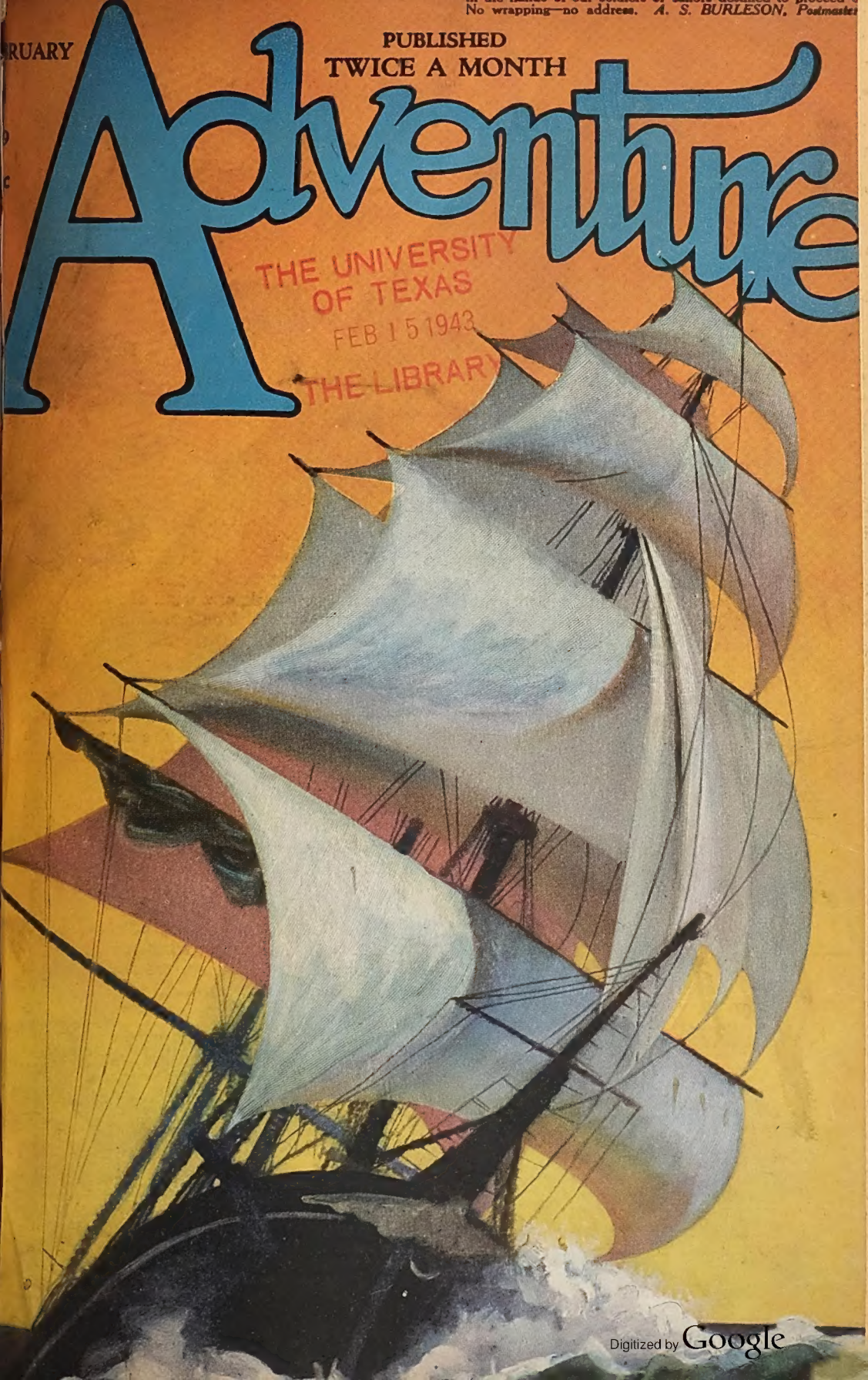

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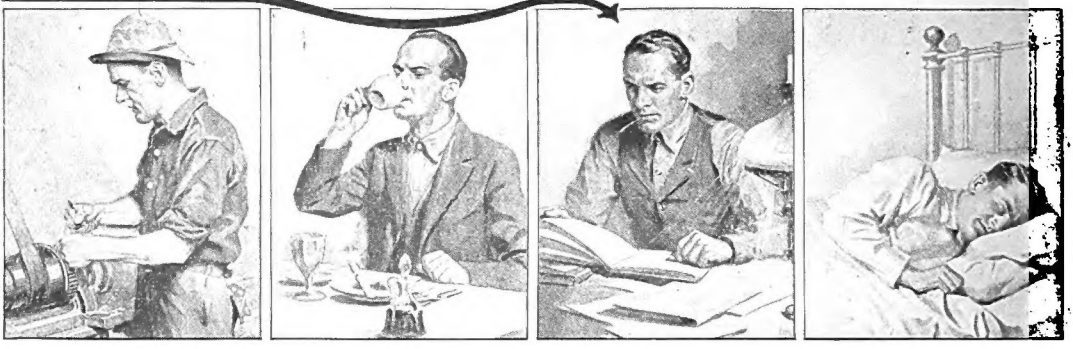

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Contents for First February Issue, 1919

Changa Nor *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **H. A. Lamb** 3

His lands being encroached upon on all sides by his enemies, *Khlit*, the Cossack, Kha Khan of the Jungar Tatars, is worried over the prospect, when *Lhon Otai*, the *shaman*, suggests the old castle of Changa Nor with its fabulous treasure—and its guard of evil spirits.

The Fact of It *Poem* . . . . . **Charles C. Jones** 37

The Bone-breaker . . . . . **Charles M. Cosby** 38

When the *Bone-breaker* finished his brooding and sends table and glasses flying in a heap, the San Francisco saloon empties in a flash. But the *Bone-breaker* must have a fight—the best victim he can find is an awkward, grotesque figure on the wharf.

The Poison Devil . . . . . **Gordon McCreagh** 42

Into the torrid, sweltering, festering heart of Borneo *Dickinson* pushes his way to the house of the one white man living among the miserable natives, the white man the natives hate because they blame him for the mysterious death stalking their villages.

Just Thinkin' . . . . . **George L. Catton and Harry M. Moore** 53

The Orphans' Home it is that makes the old man think, the home and the gold that built it. And his thoughts carry him back to a spot in the North Country, deep in the wild Porcupine District.

The Dance of the Golden Gods *A Four-Part Story Part I* . . **Stephen Chalmers** 55

It is trouble which brings *Sir Walter Raleigh* into the dingy Rat Lane goldsmith's shop. Trouble and the need of an honest assay of the gold ore he brought back with him from the New World, ore which soon sets favorites of *Elizabeth's* court plotting against him.

Chief Washakie and President Grant **A Bit of the Old West** . . **E. A. Brininstool** 85

Tennessee Holman, Gentleman . . . . . **Hapsburg Liebe** 86

Tennessee Holman, gentleman, they call him at the Old King Cole logging-camp and none challenge his right to the title until little *Boss Hanley*, nine years old and an orphan, presents his alternative.

(Continued on next page)

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

How Paradise Lost . . . . . **W. C. Tuttle** 95
When a new fad hits the West it hits it hard. So when Piperock and Paradise are bitten by the football bug no ordinary eleven-men teams can settle their rivalry, and of course, no one would suggest barring boots, spurs and other such little protection.

The Seven Diamond Rings . . . . . **R. N. Wall** 104
At the end of his journey, in Savannah, with seven diamond rings in his pocket *Dan Farmer* sees, within arm's reach, the thousand dollars necessary to pay off his farm. Then he passes through alley-like Pink Court, by *Big Mattie Smith's* eating-house.

The Brooch of Tlaya *A Three-Part Story Conclusion* . . . . **Anne Throop Craig and Louise Rice** 111
Dissatisfied with her pact with *Red Sweynie*, *Tlaya* decides to lay a scheme of her own to recapture *Fedalm* and overcome the MacDubhas. But the *Sweynie* also has plans of his own, and when both plots begin to work there are strange cries and queer doings about the MacDubha dun.

A Reviving Wind . . . . . **Will Levington Comfort** 135
On the little coasting steamer *Zirippa* bound from Mombasa to Mozambique *Firks*, the gambler, meets *Ripley Dodd* and begins to follow the fruitful trail—the trail which ends in a wretched African hut.

The Kidnapers . . . . . **G. A. Wells** 140
The old Indian-fighting troopers of the early Western days were men of all trades—even child-stealing doesn't worry the *Old Trailer* and *Andy Mac* when they have *Chief Running Fox* of the Blackfeet to deal with.

A Gentled Burley . . . . . **Hugh Kennedy** 145
The trouble with *Burley* is he hasn't altogether left off being a boy; with *Cripps*, that he can't take a joke. So when *Burley* lays *Cripps* over his knee and spanks him the British Columbia mining-camp becomes the scene of a queer hatred.

The Seigniory of the Sea *A Complete Novelette* . . . . **Samuel Alexander White** 152
It is an adventurous trip *Captain John Hilliard* starts upon, bound for the Isle aux Coudres in the St. Lawrence, where he is to command one of the four fisheries. And to start the trip he pulls out of the whirling river, his rival for the captaincy, who has sworn death will be his revenge.

A Pal Like You . . . . . **Percy W. Reynolds** 169

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 170

More about Firearms 177

Looking Ahead for Democracy **An open forum for discussion of problems after the war** . . 182

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 185

Ask Adventure 186

Lost Trails 190

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **Joe McMahon**

Cover Design . . . . . **Arthur Schwieder**

THE NEXT ADVENTURE

A book-length novel and a complete novelette will be two of the attractions for you in the Mid-February number, in your hands on January 18th. They will be

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A tale of adventure in the wild tropics of Portuguese East Africa.

For other stories in the coming number turn to the Trail Ahead on page 192.

MID-FEBRUARY ISSUE

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CHANGA NOR

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By H. A. Lamb

Author of "Khlit," "The Mighty Manslayer," etc.

Older than the five sons of Alan Toa; older than the god Natagai or the sword of the hero Afrasiab is the hunting-ground of the Dead World.

Skillful must the hunter be—wary, and mindful of the guiding star—or he will not come back from the Dead World.

Aye, he will join the thing that he hunts. And the game he seeks has been dead for ten thousand moons.

WHEN the rising sun shone on the blue waters of Changa Nor, in the year of our Lord sixteen hundred and seven, Gurd the hunter set forth on his Summer hunt. He left the castle of Changa in a small boat which took him to the shore of the lake. On the shore he found his reindeer waiting.

By Gurd's reckoning it was the year of the lion according to the Tatar calendar. Although the summits of the Khantai Khan mountains around Lake Nor were capped with snow, the sun still held its Midsummer warmth, and Gurd knew that the way to the Dead World, above Lake Baikal, was open.

Gurd was clean-limbed and massive of shoulder. He had the black hair, high cheek-bones and sparkling black eyes of the Siberian Buriate Tatar. His head was shaved in front, allowing a long tress to fall back over one shoulder. His clear eyes, somewhat slant, and white teeth bespoke youth.

He wore a reindeer jerkin, girded about the waist, with a quiver at his side. His baggy trousers of nankeen were tucked into horsehide boots. Although Gurd was young he looked to the saddling of his reindeer with the skill of an old hunter. His hands, veined and corded, revealed great physical strength. Without these two qualities Gurd could not have gone as he had done for the past five years into the Northern hunting-ground, and returned alive.

Gurd was not a hunter of sables or ermine. Nor did he follow the reindeer herds of the Baikal region. He was one of the

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few hardy spirits that went after the treasure of the Dead World, up the bank of the Lena to the Frozen Sea.

Taking a firm grasp on his staff, the brown-faced Tatar sprang nimbly into the saddle on the shoulders of one of the reindeer. At once the beast was in motion, the pack-reindeer following. The cloven hoofs of the animals made a clattering sound as they trotted with their peculiar swinging motion over the hard ground up the trail into the mountains.

When he had reached the pass where he had a last view of Changa and the lake, Gurd halted his mount and looked back. He caught the white flutter of a scarf waving from the battlements. A soft light came into his shrewd black eyes as he lifted his hand in answer before taking up his journey.

Gurd did not delay. He knew that he was late in starting on his hunt. The barriers of frost and snow would descend on the entrance to the Dead World within two months, and before that time he must be on his way home. By the time the sun had climbed the mountain summits he had vanished into the passes leading to the North.

But if he could have looked back at Changa he would have seen the white scarf still waving at intervals to speed him on his way.

II

THE setting sun that day lighted the encampment of the Jun-gar Tatars by the Tula River, not far from Lake Baikal. Sunset was the signal for gathering the *kurultai* council. But no *nacars* were needed to summon the khans. For the encampment was small, and the council consisted of a scant half-dozen of the lords of Tartary—a remnant of the warriors who had held dominion over China, Tibet, Sogdiana and Persia for centuries.

The council assembled in the pavilion of the Kha Khan, or White Khan, of the Jun-gar. This was a felt-covered tent, erected on a large wagon. As the warriors entered they seated themselves, after greeting the Kha Khan, on bearskins ranged around the fire. Behind them the walls of the pavilion were hung with weapons and trophies of their recent victory—the last of its kind—over the Chinese at Shankiang.

Opposite the entrance to the tent sat the Kha Khan, a white-haired Cossack, keen-eyed and scarred of face, known to his enemies as the Wolf. Over Khlit's knees lay the curved sword of Kaidu which had earned him his right to leadership of the khans.

On Khlit's left sat Chepé Buga, a swarthy veteran of fifty battles, and a man quick of wit with tongue or sword.

On the right of the Kha Khan was Berang, the young khan of the Ordu horde. The khans of the Hoshot and Torgot tribes completed the circle. Opposite Khlit sat Lhon Otai, a *shaman* and leader of the priest-conjurers. By the entrance lounged the giant figure of Chagan, swordbearer of the Kha Khan.

Grim men they were, hard riders and fighters. With the Kallmarks, their powerful neighbors, they formed the last of the race of Ghenghis Khan, conqueror of Asia. But today their faces were sullen and downcast. Chepé Buga puffed silently at his pipe, while Berang fumbled uneasily with his sword.

"We are like a herd of horned cattle, Khlit, lord," spoke Chepé Buga at length, twisting his mustache, "with flocks of sheep pressing in on our pasture on all sides. Hey, soon there will not be room on the Tatar steppe for our horses' dung!"

"Aye, that is true," nodded Berang. "The tidings we have received today is that the Kallmarks are driving their herds over our southwest boundaries, near Khamil. And there are many horsemen in the Kallmark horde. Now they are quarrelsome, being more numerous than we are."

"The Mings and Manchus," added another khan, "have driven us from the *dorok* graves of our fathers by the great desert of Kobi, to the river Kerulon and the Khantai Khan Mountains. They have killed many of us."

"We can go no further north, Khlit, lord," agreed Chepé Buga moodily, "for the frozen rivers of Baikal are near us, and the cattle can not graze in the snow."

Khlit smoked his black pipe silently, scanning the faces of his companions shrewdly. He understood their anger. The Tatar of the steppe must have freedom to rove, without tie of home or god; no intruder can take their lands. They looked to him for protection of their boundaries. He had aided them twice to defeat Chinese invaders of the steppe. But since then the

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strength of the khans had been diminished by the loss of the powerful Kallmark horde.

"Our lands," he said slowly, "the lands of the Jun-gar which stretch from the desert of Kobi to Muscovy and from the white regions of the North to the Thian Shan Mountains are the richest in the world for grazing, and for hunting. I know, for I have seen the steppe of Russia, the fertile valleys of Persia, and the hinterland of Cathay. So long as we keep these lands we shall have large herds and plenty of food."

"That may be, Khlit, lord," spoke Berang respectfully. "But how shall we keep them, when the Keraits are driving their sheep over our boundary to the south, and the Muscovy soldiers and traders are at Tomsk? By the god Meik who watches over the forests we must give these Kallmark men a taste of sharp swords."

"Aye," growled another khan approvingly, "we will take their herds that have come over the boundary, and their widows will seek new husbands."

"Our swords grow rusty, O Kha Khan," broke in the mighty Chagan from the door. "Come, let us whet them up a bit with bones and blood."

Khlit made no answer. He knew better than his companions the strength of the Kallmarks whose territory was the heart of Asia. Futhermore they were allied to the men of Muscovy who were as numerous as the sands of the great desert. War with the Kallmarks must be avoided at all cost. But how was he to keep the lands of the Jun-gar from invasion?

To gain time to think, he addressed Lhon Otai the *shaman* who had not yet spoken.

"What is your word, Lhon Otai?" he asked. "Do you also counsel war?"

The *shaman's* shrewd eyes swept the circle. He was an old man and stout. The khans declared that he had the craft to coax a fish from a river. He was a leader of the *shamans* who played the double rôle of physician and priest to the tribes of central Asia.

"A *shaman* does not counsel war or peace, Khlit, lord," he responded with a bow. "Truly we can heal the sick, or drive out unclean spirits by the aid of the god Natagai, as our fathers have done, or prophesy events that will come to pass——"

"Prophesy then, Lhon Otai," demanded Chepé Buga who was lacking in reverence, "how we ma be rid of this plague of invaders. Come, give us a good prophecy!"

The khans muttered agreement. A frown passed swiftly over the *shaman's* smooth brow. He stood up by the fire in his long fur robe ornamented with rabbits' ears and walrus teeth.

"A prophecy!" chorused the khans, with the exception of Khlit. "Read us the future, O wise shepherd of the spirits."

Lhon Otai made no response. He doffed his fur coat. Advancing to the half-circle of chiefs, he drew a long cord from his girdle. One end of this he gave to a khan. Then he passed the cord in a loop around his neck under the chin.

FOR a moment Lhon Otai stared mutely at the ridgepole of the tent. While the khans watched intently, he lay down full length on the ground. The remaining end of the cord which was still around his neck, he tossed to Chagan who took it gingerly. Lhon Otai now lay on his back, both arms extended wide.

Berang, who had witnessed many manifestations of the *shaman*, took the fur coat and laid it over the prostrate figure which was now concealed except for the extended hands. The khans fell silent. The heavy breathing of Lhon Otai raised and lowered the coat. The exposed hands clenched as if in suffering.

"See," whispered Berang to Khlit, "the *shaman* is visiting the forest of Meik in spirit, where he learns wisdom of the king of the ravens. That is why his face is hidden—that we may not read his thoughts, whether good or ill. The ancient raven knows all that has happened, or will happen."

The hands of Lhon Otai dug themselves into the rugs on the floor of the tent, and the *shaman* groaned. Chepé Buga watched proceedings with a half-smile hidden under his black mustache, but the smile faded at a groan from the conjurer.

"That is the signal!" cried Berang. "Pull on the cord."

Chagan and the khan who held the other end both tugged quickly on the cord. The rope appeared from under the coat, taut and whole.

A sigh of amazement came from Berang, for the hands of the conjurer had not been lost to sight. The young khan rose and drew off the fur coat. Lhon Otai lay as if asleep, and his yellow face was pale.

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"Presently," whispered Berang again, "he will return from the spirit forest and will tell us the wisdom he has learned. Truly, he must have been among the spirits in the radiance of *Begli* the moon, for the cord cut through his neck."

Khlit made no response and before long Lhon Otai sat erect, his eyes half closed.

"I have heard the words of the raven," he chanted, "by the pine-trees of Meik. The raven that has talked with Ghenghis Khan, of the Golden Horde, and with the five sons of Alan Goa. I have heard the sacred magpie fluttering in the trees by the tomb of Ghenghis Khan, the conqueror of the world. I bring a wisdom from the spirit world of *Begli* to the living paladins of Tatary. This is the wisdom."

Lhon Otai paused, while the khans bent closer, and Chagan stared from the *shaman* to the cord.

"The land of the khans," resumed Lhon Otai," has been entered by strangers. But there is a way to drive them from the land of the Jun-gar. A day's ride to the south from Lake Baikal, from the three gods of Dianda, is the lake of Changa Nor. In the castle which stands in the middle of the lake there is a treasure. The khans must seize the castle, with its treasure. Then they can pay the Kallmarks to leave the land of the bowmen, and their boundaries shall be as before."

Silence greeted the words of the *shaman*, broken by Berang.

"Aye, Lhon Otai," he said respectfully, "there is a ruined castle that stands on some rocks in the waters of Changa Nor. I have heard it belongs to an ivory-hunter. But I heard nothing of a treasure therein."

"That may be," broke in Chepé Buga, "for I have heard a smiliar tale. My father told it. There was a powerful kingdom to the south, ruled by a rich Gur-Khan in the time of Ghenghis Khan. The Gur-Khan was slain in a battle. But his treasure was not found. He had kept it in one of the castles. Speak, O gossiper with magpies and ravens, is this the treasure you would have us seek?"

Lhon Otai scowled, for Chepé Buga, who was one of the most powerful of the Tatars, treated him with scant reverence.

"You have seen, Chepé Buga, how true are the words of wisdom. Aye, this is the hoard of the Gur-Khan, watched over by a hunter named Gurd who is a solitary fellow of dark pursuits. He has gone on a hunt to the North and Changa castle may be easily seized. But the wisdom told me that it was guarded by evil spirits."

"No doubt," retorted Chepé Buga grimly, "it is well guarded or you would have had your claws in it before now."

Lhon Otai pulled his fur robe about him and rose to his feet. The khans drew back at the dark glance he threw Chepé Buga. He bowed before Khlit.

"Go to Changa Nor, O Kha Khan," he said firmly. "There you will find the aid you seek."

Khlit, who was stroking the sword on his knees, did not look up.

"They are evil folk, I hear," put in Berang. Unbuckling his gold-chased girdle, the khan tossed it to Lhon Otai. "Take this, *Shaman*. There will be other rewards, of jewels when we find the treasure."

"Aye," muttered Chepé Buga, rising and stretching like a dog," and there will be split bamboos for the soles of your fat feet, if we do not find it, *Shaman*."

With that the *kurultai* broke up. But Khlit remained in his tent in thought. The words of the *shaman* had touched a chord of memory. In his Cossack days he had heard of a kingdom like that of the Gur-Khan and a treasure. There had been tales of a rich monarch in Asia, whose wealth had escaped search. But he could recall neither name nor place.

Khlit dismissed the matter from his mind with a grunt, resolved that Changa Nor should tell him the truth, if there were truth, in the tale.

III

THE second sun was high when Khlit, followed by Chagan and the khans with two hundred picked horsemen from the encampment reached the summit of the hills around Changa Nor. Lhon Otai, at Chepé Buga's request, had accompanied them.

They saw a blue lake, a scant half-mile in width, with a castle a short distance from the opposite shore. The castle, a square, massive structure, stood upon a stone foundation which rose a few feet above the surface of the lake sheer with the walls. There was no sign of a gateway, although narrow slits pierced the walls and the single tower.

A small boat was moored beside the castle,

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showing how the occupants gained the shore. But there was no sign of life about the place. The battlements of the keep and tower were in ruins, although the walls seemed solid enough.

"Hey, here is a fair stronghold to which you have brought us, Lhon Otai," growled Chepé Buga. "Methinks it would take an army of sea serpents to seize it, or a regiment of harpies. Did the ancient raven croak to you how we were to take it, if perchance its people refuse surrender?"

"Nay, that is your business, not mine," muttered the *shaman*. "Said I not, it was guarded by evil spirits?"

As the riders surveyed the scene its desolation impressed them. The snow-capped mountains in the background cast their reflection into the still waters of the lake. The shores were a wooded wilderness. The boat was the only indication of human beings about the place.

"It will take more than spirits, evil or otherwise," retorted the Tatar, "to keep me out, if I choose to enter. By the same token, only a devil's brood would infest such a place, where there are no horses or pastures."

When they had gained the shore nearest the castle Khlit directed Berang to swim his horse out the short distance to the castle and demand that the place be opened to them and the boat sent ashore.

The young khan carried out his orders eagerly. He spurred his mount into the water and steered him toward the black bulk of the castle. The watchers saw him linger under the walls for a moment, his face turned up to the openings overhead. Then Berang slid from his saddle and swam alongside his horse back to shore.

The khan swaggered up to the group of horsemen, happy in the display he had made of his mount.

"Strange folk are those, Khlit, lord," he made report. "I told them your word, but they answered that the castle would not yield. Then I swore that we would storm it, and the voice within cried that many who had tried to do that had died."

"We have warned them," said Khlit, "now we will take the castle."

Berang cast a doubtful glance at the lake. He had seen no foothold in the smooth walls, slippery with moss, nor any door. Cannon would batter the place into submission, but the khans had no cannon. The walls were within long bow-shot. Yet there were no defenders visible to shoot at.

Khlit, however, soon showed how he meant to set about the attack. Under his direction the Tatars were divided into two parties. One, commanded by Chepé Buga, set about cutting down large pine-trees with the axes they always carried at their saddles. The other party trimmed the fallen trees and rolled them to the water's edge.

In a short time a sufficient number of pine trunks were assembled to bind together with strong vines and fibers into a raft, twenty paces square.

Not content with this, Khlit saw to it that certain trunks, tall and slender, were fastened in pairs and laid on the raft. The sun was low by the time this was done, so the Cossack ordered his followers to make camp for the night.

The men were veterans at warfare and lost no time in picketing their horses for the night. Fires were lighted and the warriors were soon toasting pieces of meat they had brought in their saddle bags at the flames, and sampling *arak* in high good humor at the prospect of an engagement on the morrow. Khlit meanwhile took Chepé Buga and Berang aside and gave them instructions.

Seventy picked men, he said, were to go on the raft at dawn and paddle to the castle, using branches as oars. The trimmed pines on the raft they were to raise against the battlements after the manner of storming ladders. Berang would have command of the raft.

The best archers under Chepé Buga were to line the heights along the shore and direct a flight of arrows against the battlements while the makeshift ladders were raised and the attackers swarmed up them.

The plan promised well, and fell in with the Tatars' mood. They were awake before daybreak, armed and ready for the onset. The walls of the castle showed dark. Even when the raft was pushed out from shore and steered toward the castle there were no signs of life among the defenders.

Silently the raft was propelled nearer its object. It reached the rock foundation of the castle. Still there had been no sound from the walls. Khlit with his bowmen on the shore scanned the dark bulk of the keep gainst the crimson of sunrise but saw

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nothing at which to direct their arrows. For the first time Khlit felt a pang of foreboding; he would have been better pleased if the walls had been manned with defenders.

Khlit was a Christian after the manner of the Cossacks and he had not been inclined to credit the *shaman's* talk of evil spirits, or the warning from the castle of Changa. But he frowned as he watched the raft come to rest under the menacing walls, and the tree trunks raised against the battlements. Another moment and the Tatars would have been swarming up the improvised ladders. And then he saw a glint of light in one of the slits in the walls.

At the same instant a shout came from the men on the raft. The point of light grew to a strange flare. The watchers on the shore saw a weird thing. From the slit in the wall a curtain of fire descended on the raft. Flame and smoke cascaded down the raised tree trunks and ran along the surface of the raft.

The shout changed to a wild yell of pain. Khlit saw figures of men leaping from the raft into the water, and the tree trunks falling back into the lake. In a moment the raft was empty, save for the flickering flames and curling smoke.

At Khlit's command a volley of arrows sped against the castle, only to rattle from the wall harmlessly. The flame torrent from the slit ceased, and he saw his men swimming toward shore. Using the tree trunks to keep them afloat, they were making their way slowly toward him. The walls of Changa showed dark and silent as before.

"Nay, Khlit, lord," Berang stood before him, armor and clothing drenched, "it was death to stay on the raft. The flames caught even on green wood and leather garment. By the white falcon of Kaidu, we were near death! Some were burned but saved their lives by leaping in the lake. If it had not been for the tree trunks, we in armor would not have lived."

"You did right to come back, Berang," said Khlit, seeing the young khan's shame at his retreat. "You could not guard against flames."

Lhon Otai, the *shaman*, approached them with a triumphant smile.

"Said I not the place was infested with evil spirits, Khlit, lord?" he bowed. "The words of the raven were true."

"Nay, Lhon Otai," growled Chepé Buga, who had been watching the proceedings closely, "that was not demon-work, but fire. The stuff is made by Chinese fire-makers. I have seen it used before, in siege work."

"Nevertheless," retorted the *shaman*, "my prophecy was true. And you have not yet taken Changa Nor, in spite of your loud-tongued boasting."

"Peace!" growled Khlit, seeing Chepé Buga flush dangerously. "Before we act further, we must know if there be truly a treasure in this hold."

Chepé Buga stroked his mustache thoughtfully.

"LAST night, O Kha Khan," he said gruffly, "the old fellows among my men told me more of the tale of the Gur-Khan. When they heard we were to attack Changa Nor they were eager for the onset, because of the story of treasure. Many minstrels have sung of the Gur-Khan on their *dombras*—the Gur-Khan who was the friend of Ghenghis Khan."

Berang and his dripping warriors crowded close about the khans as Chepé Buga spoke, forgetful of their wet garments.

"The Gur-Khan," resumed the veteran chief, "was a follower of a strange faith. He did not pour libations to Natagai or Meik of the forest, nor did he pray in the temple of Fo. So runs the tale. His daughter who was also of his faith, married a strong warrior who kept the treasure safe. This treasure they cherished because it belonged to their god."

"An evil demon," amended Lhon Otai.

"Evil or not, the treasure was great. The grandfather of one of my minstrels has seen robes set with jewels of Persia, pearls and sapphires. And crowns of heavy gold with rubies. And the tale tells of a scepter of pure emeralds as large as a small sword. The empire of the Gur-Khan has been scattered as the dust before the wind. But the treasure has been kept by his children."

"The grandfather of my minstrel," continued Chepé Buga carelessly, "swears that the treasure was last seen in the hands of the sixth in descent from the Gur-Khan, at a place which is called the Lake of Stones, by the Sea of Sand, north of the Thian Shan Mountains."

"There is the lake!" cried Berang, pointing to the blue waters of Changa.

"And the Sea of Sand must be the great desert which lies not far from here," added another warrior eagerly.

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"It may be," nodded Chepé Buga. "The minstrels tell of strange animals belonging to the Gur-Khan, of tame stags and gerfalcons that needed no training to bring down herons for their masters. Also of beasts of the forest that once guarded the treasure.

"I care not for such tales; but here is wind of a goodly treasure. Moreover, there is Gurd, the hunter who brings sledloads of costly ivory to trade at Irkutsk, on Lake Baikal. Gurd lives at Changa Nor. Where does he get the ivory? Aye, by Afrasiab's sword, I have a mind to see the vaults of Chang! I scent plunder here."

"Nay, we have great need of such treasure," put in Berang seriously. "For we must ransom our lands from the Kallmarks, with their Kerait and Muscovy rascals. We must take Changa Nor."

"A hard lair to crack open!" Chepé Buga stroked his scarred chin thoughtfully. "We must assemble not one but four rafts, light smoke fires against the walls to blind the defenders and attack with all our strength."

Khlit shook his shaggy head.

"That would cost us many lives—needlessly," he objected. "Changa Nor may be taken in another way."

The khans watched him expectantly. They had seen Khlit overthrow two Chinese generals by strategy, and they had firm confidence in the craft of the veteran Cossack.

"In two months it will be the time of frost and snow," explained Khlit. "And the waters of Changa will be frozen. When the ice is thick enough to bear our men we can attack unseen in the dark or in a snowstorm and take the castle by surprise. We have too few horsemen to waste lives."

Berang and Chepé Buga nodded in understanding. Truly, Khlit was a wise leader.

"But the Kallmarks," objected Berang. "They will be advancing into our choicest grazing lands."

"We will send an envoy to them, asking them to go back to the boundaries in peace. If they refuse, we will assemble our horsemen from the Jun-gar hordes. We will meet—all of our tribes—by the shore of Baikal. Then we will march south, taking Changa by surprise on the way, for the lake will then be frozen."

"Ha, a good word, O Kha Khan," grunted Chepé Buga, tapping his sword. "And the treasure of Changa Nor——"

A shout of approval greeted this, in which Berang joined heartily. The two magic words of treasure and battle spread through the assembled ranks of horsemen and made them forget their mishap of the morning. Once again Khlit had wrought a change of heart through his leadership.

But Khlit did not smile. He had little hope that the powerful Kallmarks would accept his offer of peace.

For the second time the memory of the Gur-Khan story troubled him. In Russia he had heard the tale of a treasure guarded by animals, belonging to a monarch who was a priest. Almost he recalled the name of the king—the words "Prester John" rose in his mind. He felt, however, that Lhon Otai, who knew the secrets of central Asia from the wide-spread *shaman* cult, could supply him with the name he sought.

Lhon Otai pushed through the throng.

"Wisely have you spoken, O Kha Khan," he bowed, a smile on his thick lips. "But would it not be well to capture the hunter Gurd? He knows the secret of Changa Nor. Two days ago I have heard he left here for the North. He must pass through Irkutsk, and he may be followed from there to the Dead World where he can be traced in the snow."

"I will go after him," ventured Berang quickly.

"Nay, Berang," Khlit looked fondly on his youngest khan. "You must assemble the men of the Ordus for me."

"Then I will bring you the demon hunter," offered Chepé Buga, "bound and trussed to the reindeer they say he rides, like a sack of meal to a camel."

A chorus of voices announced the willingness of the other horsemen to go in quest of the hunter who had a dark name in Tatary. But Khlit waved them aside.

"I have heard," he said grimly, "that the hunter Gurd is in league with the powers of evil. You and I, men of the Jun-gar, do not fear the *Rakchas* or the demons of the icy caves of the dead. But we will send after Gurd a man who can meet his wiles with enchantments. This man shall pick a score of fleet horsemen. Lhon Otai will go."

The *shaman* started and the glance he threw at Khlit was far from kindly. He protested that he was not a warrior, that his bulk would break the back of a horse. Berang and some of the Tatars objected that the *shaman* must remain with them.

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But Khlit was not to be moved. Lhon Otai and no other, he declared, must go after Gurd.

Chepé Buga, who was well pleased with the plight of the revered *shaman*, added his word to that of Khlit. So, when the khans left the shore of Changa Nor, they went in two parties. One returned to their encampment; the other, headed by Lhon Otai, wound into the passes leading to the North, in the tracks of Gurd, the hunter.

But as they entered the mountains one of the riders selected by Lhon Otai turned off, unseen by the others, to the south.

IV

FOR the second time in one day Gurd the hunter was puzzled. Halting his little cavalcade of reindeer at the summit of a pass, he looked back the way he had come. He saw no one, heard no one. The rocky waste of the tundras of the Dead World lay behind him and on all sides. Barren hills thrust their summits through the scarred plain. But a mile behind him some rooks were circling over the pass he had taken. Not so long before, he had startled the rooks into flight. They had settled down again in the firs after his departure. Now they were again in flight.

There was nothing unusual in the flight of rooks. Save early that morning Gurd had looked back and seen some mountain goats bounding from their rocks an hour after he had passed. It was not likely that other hunters were passing that way, for it was near the bank of the Lena where few sables and lynxes were to be found.

Gurd cast a speculative glance at the tracks his reindeer made. The splay-footed beasts left clear prints in the moss and dirt. A clever hunter might easily follow such tracks. But why should any one follow him?

A week before Gurd had left the three Dianda rocks on Lake Baikal and struck into the tundras which would lead him to the Lena. Already the silence and chill of the Dead World had closed around him. Until today he had thought he was alone in the near-by tundras. He urged on his reindeer thoughtfully. From time to time he stopped to change his saddle to another beast, to make better speed. And as he did so, he looked back. He saw nothing save the fir clumps and moss valleys of the waste land. By nightfall he was convinced that he had been mistaken in thinking others were near him.

Gurd was afoot an hour before sunrise. The sky to the north was aflicker with the reflection of the Northern Lights, the sparks from the anvil of the *Cheooki* gods, as the Yakut fur-hunters had told him. The cold stirred Gurd's appetite but he contented himself with chewing a handful of cheese and drawn beef which he drew from his saddle bags. For the cold reminded him that he was still two days' travel from his hunting-ground and Autumn with its heavy snowfall was at hand. Already the messengers of frost were in the air.

Before noon that day the waters of the Lena appeared before him. Without hesitation Gurd drove the reindeer into the icy river, steeling himself against the chill of the water which came to his waist. Some seals which were sporting about the film of ice on the further bank dived into the water at his approach.

"Live well, brothers," Gurd called to them gaily as he left the river. "It is not your pelts I seek."

Humming to himself he sought the farther edge of the firs. Before plunging into the tundras again he looked back. He drew in his breath sharply.

Swimming the Lena at the point where he had crossed he saw a score of horsemen. From their caps he made out that they were Tatars, not Yakuts. He waited to see if they would attempt to kill the tempting seals which were swimming near. They paid no attention to the animals.

Gurd's keen black eyes scanned them as they disappeared into the firs. Here were Tatars who had not the bearing of hunters. Moreover they seemed to be following in his tracks.

After a moment's deliberation, Gurd turned the head of his reindeer aside into the firs and took up another course. His impassive olive face betrayed no surprise at what he had seen. A life of battling with cold and hunger, with the relentless forces of the Dead World, and with the hatred of men had steeled him to hardship and tempered his courage.

On the summit of a hillock some distance on, he looked back. The riders had come to the point where he turned aside. After a moment's delay, he saw them take the course he had followed. He knew now that they were after him.

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Gurd wasted no time in wondering why he was pursued. All his life the hand of other Tatars had been against him. Against him and the others of Changa Nor.

He urged his reindeer to greater speed, at the same time realizing how hard it would be to outdistance the horsemen. The reindeer could go no faster than their swinging trot, and the pack-animals must be whipped on continually.

At the edge of a clearing he looked back and saw that his pursuers were a scant half-mile behind. Moreover they had sighted him now, and were heading straight for him. But Gurd saw that the shadows were lengthening and the Northern night was at hand.

He drew his reindeer farther into the firs where the ground showed tracks less easily, and where he was lost to sight. He could hear the horsemen crashing through the underbrush and guessed that they had divided in seeking him.

Gurd was now in his own hunting-ground, which was familiar to him, and he was able to dodge the riders until twilight had veiled his tracks. The sound of pursuit lessened and he guessed that the others had assembled. He led the reindeer a short distance further to avoid the chance of being found by accident in the night, and tied them fast. Then he sat down and made a hearty meal—not before he had seen that his beasts were fed and their packs removed. With a grunt of satisfaction he caught sight of a gleam of fire back in the woods.

When the Northern Lights began flickering in the sky Gurd left his reindeer and advanced cautiously in the direction of the fire. Slipping from fir to fir silently he soon arrived outside the circle of firelight.

Here he crouched and watched. He saw a dozen Tatars stretched out asleep in their cloaks. Others were sitting by the blaze drinking *arak* and tossing dice. Apart from the rest was a fat man in a costly fur robe adorned with bears' claws. Him Gurd scanned thoughtfully.

The Tatars paid no heed to him, and he could have shot arrows into the group from the bow at his back with impunity. But such was not Gurd's plan. He waited until others of the men had dropped off to sleep.

Placing his hands to his mouth Gurd made a peculiar croaking sound. A second time he did this. One of the men raised his head sleepily.

"Go yonder, Lhon Otai," the Tatar chuckled, "your brother the raven calls you into the forest. Perhaps he will tell you where the rascal Gurd is hiding."

The *shaman* made no response. But again came the croaking summons from the forest. Lhon Otai turned his heavy head and scanned the trees from slant eyes. He saw nothing. At a third summons, he got to his feet with a sigh and made his way into the wood.

Gurd watched his coming intently. Drawing a heavy knife from his girdle he crept into the path of the *shaman* and waited. Lhon Otai halted and he repeated the raven's croak very softly. Lhon Otai stepped forward.

As he did so a dark figure rose up before him. He felt himself gripped by the shoulders and something cold pressed against his sleek throat under the chin. His squeal of alarm ended in a gurgle.

"Be silent, *Shaman*," a voice hissed in his ear, "and come with me. If you make a sound, my brothers the wolves will feast well from your carcass."

The *shaman* shivered. He threw a longing glance in the direction of the fire. Then, impelled by whisper and dagger's prick, he stepped forward feeling his way slowly through the pines in the direction Gurd indicated.

When they came to the reindeer, the hunter released Lhon Oati for a moment. He returned with a stout cord. With this he bound the *shaman* to a tree trunk.

"Harken, *Shaman*," he whispered, "you came to find a raven and you found a man who has no love for you or your kind. You are afraid of me now. Presently you shall fear more. Watch."

Gurd crouched beside his prisoner. Placing his hands to his mouth he uttered a shrill wail. He repeated the call and waited. Lhon Otai watched him as well as he could by the flickering lights in the sky. Then Lhon Otai grunted with terror.

A pair of green eyes gleamed from the darkness in front of him. The eyes stared at him, unblinkingly. He heard the reindeer scuffling in fright. Gurd laughed.

"That is my cousin, the lynx, Lhon Otai," he whispered. "He has learned to come to me for meat. He would find rare picking in your fat carcass."

The *shaman* shivered, and strained against his bonds. But Gurd laughed softly

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and tossed a piece of meat from his bags toward the eyes. There was a soft pad-pad of feet in the darkness and the lynx disappeared.

"You are crafty, Lhon Otai," cautioned the hunter, "but loosen not your cords. Or my cousin yonder will be upon your back."

The *shaman* needed no further warning to remain passive, even after Gurd had vanished in the shadows. He did not doubt that Gurd held power over the beasts of the tundras. He had heard tales of the hunter of the Dead World, who rode upon reindeer. He cursed the drunkenness of his men, and Khlit, who had sent him on this quest.

It was near daybreak when Gurd returned. Lhon Otai heard the trampling of a large beast accompanying the hunter and he shivered anew. But Gurd's speech relieved him.

"Here is a horse for you to ride, *Shaman*," he grunted. "You would break the back of my reindeer. I will tie you to the saddle. Hey, if you try to flee I will bury the feathers of an arrow in your kidneys. Come!"

When the *shaman* was mounted, and the hunter had loosened his reindeer the two set off in the half-light of dawn through the forest. Lhon Otai cast a vengeful glance in the direction of the Tatar encampment.

"Your fellows will not follow us, *Shaman*," laughed Gurd who had caught the glance. "For their horses are well on the way to the Lena, and they can not catch us, afoot. I have seen to it."

Lhon Otai smothered a curse. Truly this hunter was in league with the evil spirits of the forest, if not with Meik himself. For, single-handed and armed only with a bow and knife, he had outwitted a score of horsemen of the khans.

V

"AND now, Lhon Otai—if that be your name—you can tell me whence you and your men come, and why you follow me into the Dead World."

As Gurd spoke, his clear black eyes scanned the *shaman* thoughtfully. They were camped for the night well beyond reach of the dismounted Tatars, in a grotto by a small stream in the waste country. Around them reared a nest of rocky hillocks, barren even of firs. The cold wind of the North searched the ravine where they were, and fanned the fire Gurd had lighted. The hunter, however, seemed to know his way. He had led them without hesitation to the grotto. Lhon Otai bethought him swiftly.

"We came, I and my men," he explained, "from the khans of the Jun-gar. Khlit, the Kha Khan, ordered that you be brought to him. He has heard tales of your hunting."

Gurd, busy toasting meat on a wooden spit, made no response.

"I did as the Kha Khan bade me," went on Lhon Otai. "We learned the course you had taken from the hamlet of Irkutsk. Then hunters told us you had been seen heading for the Lena. Before long my men found the trail of your reindeer."

Still Gurd was silent.

"We heard you had left Changa Nor," the *shaman* said uneasily. "But we meant not to harm you."

Gurd bared his teeth, but he did not laugh.

"My cousin the lynx, O *Shaman*," he said softly, "has followed us, unseen by you. He is near by, in the rocks, sniffing at the roasting meat. Shall I call him? Or will you tell me truth instead of lies. In a month I would return to Irkutsk with ivory. The Kha Khan could have found me there. Why did he send after me to the North? What were you doing near Changa Nor?"

The *shaman* threw a fearful look at the rocks behind him.

"What do I know of the will of the khans?" he whined. "Did I come willingly to the North? Nay, Khlit has a mind to Changa Nor and what it hides. He has been there with his horsemen——"

A change came over the impassive face of the hunter. His eyes narrowed in anger, and his heavy hand clutched the spit.

"Who brought the khans to Changa Nor?" he cried. "Come, speak——"

"They attacked the castle, Gurd," ventured Lhon Otai shrewdly, "and because of the accursed fires that drove them away, Khlit set a price on your head. Aye, and he bade me seek you, thinking that I might die thereby."

"The fires," quoth Gurd with a laugh, "guard well Changa castle and what is within. Truly then, this Khlit loves you not, Lhon Otai?"

The *shaman's* thick lips twisted in a snarl. Memory of the long feud between himself and the Cossack rankled. In his

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anger he spoke what he had long kept secret. Yet he spoke not unknowingly, for he was shrewd and Gurd might serve him.

"Aye," he responded, "the Kha Khan is my foe. Once I saw the gold cross he carried on a chain about his neck. The khans know it not, but he is a *caphar*, a Christian. He is hated of the god Natagai whose priest I am."

"A Christian?" Gurd surveyed his companion thoughtfully. "You know it?"

"Aye. But so great is Khlit's skill in war that the blind fools of the Jun-gar hold him in awe."

Gurd turned his spit slowly, while Lhon Otai watched.

"Men have told me, Lhon Otai, that Khlit is a paladin among warriors. Yet he did not come to Changa Nor to sport with fire. Why, therefore?"

The *shaman* leaned closer.

"Khlit has wind of the treasure of Changa Nor, Gurd—such a treasure as Tatary knows not. He has heard the old tale of the Gur-Khan. I, too, have heard the tale, through my priests. Harken, hunter. You know what truth there is in the story. Tell me what you know. I can reward you."

Gurd's level brow darkened, and he ceased turning the spit.

"Open the door of Changa castle to me," pursued Lhon Otai, "when I come with my friends, and you will not lack for jewels, hunter. It is better that I should have the treasure than the *caphar*, Khlit."

"So you have friends, Lhon Otai?" Gurd asked softly. "Berang and Chepé Buga? The khan of the dark face is second to Khlit in power."

"Nay, Chepé Buga's wit lies in his sword. He is an honest dolt——"

The *shaman* broke off. Gurd had shown no liking for his words. He strove in vain to read the expressionless face of the hunter. But Gurd kept silence while they ate. Afterward, he bound Lhon Otai.

"Tomorrow, Lhon Otai," the hunter said, "you will see a hunt in the Dead World."

Again, Lhon Otai wondered. What manner of hunt was this, in the waste of tundras? He slept little that night. When he looked beyond the circle of fire he saw green eyes staring at him unblinkingly, and remembered that Gurd's cousin had had no meat that night.

Gurd set out early the next day afoot, leading the three pack-reindeer. Lhon Otai followed him curiously. The hunter had his bow slung over his back, and he walked carelessly, looking about him as if seeking for landmarks. Never had Lhon Otai seen a hunt begin as this one.

The place, too, was barren of game. A keen-eyed falcon could not have spied a rabbit or wild mountain sheep. It was desolate of vegetation, save for stunted larches and the dry moss that the reindeer fed upon. Lhon Otai panted as he stumbled over the rocks, but Gurd walked swiftly ahead, casting anxious glances at the overcast sky which foretold snowfall.

As they advanced Lhon Otai became aware of a peculiar odor. Dry and stringent, it resembled the smell of dead things. Gurd paid no heed to it, but pressed on. The odor grew, and Lhon Otai shivered, for he liked it not.

At the side of a nest of rocks Gurd paused and tied the reindeer. He pointed beyond the rocks.

"Here is the hunting-ground of the Dead World, Lhon Otai," he said grimly. "And the game of ten thousand moons."

Urged by his curiosity the *shaman* advanced beyond the rocks. Then he halted in amazement.

Before him stretched a plain. It was void of vegetation. But in the ground were heaps of white bones. And the bones were gigantic. He made out skulls measuring the height of a man in width.

The strange odor assailed him more strongly. It went up his nostrils to his brain, and Lhon Otai shivered. For the bones he saw were not those of ordinary animals. They were many times the size of a horse. A single jaw-bone at his feet was too heavy for him to lift. Tusks projected from the half-buried skulls to twice the height of a man.

"The bones of elephants!" he cried to Gurd, who was watching him.

The hunter shook his head.

"Nay, saw you elephants with tusks like those? These beasts belong to another time. I heard the story in Irkutsk of giant tusks along the frozen rivers and years ago I found this spot. Here is ivory without end. It is yellow with age. But it is choice, and more valuable than that of the Asia elephants. See."

He advanced to a near-by skeleton. With the heavy hatchet he carried he cut at the

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socket of one of the tusks. A few moments' wielding of the ax loosened the tusk, and Gurd brought it back to the *shaman*. It was seared with age, but of massive ivory, and weighty.

"These are the *mamuts*, Lhon Otai," said Gurd gravely. "The beasts that lived before the time of Ghenghis Khan, or the Christian prophets. A herd of them must have died here, perhaps frozen to death in the ice."

Lhon Otai touched the tusk gingerly, muttering a charm as he did so against evil spirits. He knew now where Gurd got his ivory that he sold at Irkutsk. But his fear of the hunter was not diminished. Here was a man who entered unafraid the burial-place of the past, and held communion with beasts of the forest. Surely he must be guided by evil spirits, or he would be afraid.

Gurd wasted no more time in talk. By hard work he had enough of the tusks to load the three pack-reindeer by noon. A cold wind had sprung up and scattering flakes of snow were falling. Knowing the danger of being caught in these regions by the Autumn snow, Lhon Otai helped the hunter break camp and take up the journey to the south. More than once, however, he cast uneasy glances at the giant tusks which he held to be things of ill omen and hateful to Meik, the deity of the forests.

The next day they were well on their way back to the Lena's bank. The first snowfall had whitened the ground, but the day was clear. So clear that Lhon Otai made out a score of dark figures crossing a plain in front of them, heading not toward the south, but west. These, he knew, were his late companions, now seeking their way homeward afoot.

Gurd halted his reindeer when he sighted them.

"They have lost their way," cried Lhon Otai, with a swift glance at Gurd. "If they follow their course they will go further into the Dead World and perish at the hands of the *Cheeoki* gods. Warn then to turn south."

"How may that be done?" Gurd's black eyes held no sympathy. "They would send an arrow through my jerkin if I came near enough to speak to them. And the sun will guide them."

"Nay, Gurd," objected Lhon Otai, "the sun is veiled by the clouds. The cold grows daily. The wolf packs will begin to hunt soon. They will die if you do not warn them to go back and follow the river south."

Gurd hesitated.

"You will be safe on the reindeer," urged the *shaman*. "And they will not dare to shoot at you for fear of hitting me."

Gurd set the reindeer in motion toward the men reluctantly. The Tatars had seen them, and halted.

Unnoticed by Gurd the *shaman* drew his horse behind the mount of the hunter. The men were coming toward them eagerly. Gurd could see their faces, drawn with hunger. He halted, a good distance away.

"This will do," he said. "Do you call to them, and waste no breath."

The *shaman* waved his hand to attract the attention of the men, whom Gurd was watching keenly for signs of an arrow fitted to bow. Apparently without intent the *shaman* urged his horse beside the hunter.

Then, seizing a moment when Gurd was not watching him, Lhon Otai flung his great bulk from his horse upon Gurd. The weight of the *shaman* and Gurd's sudden twist in the saddle as he turned too late to avoid the other, sent the reindeer stumbling to its knees. Hunter and *shaman* rolled to the snow.

A shout went up from the Tatars who broke into a run when they saw what had happened. They were still some two hundred paces away, but Gurd was helpless under the weight of his foe. His bow had slipped from his back in the fall, and he was unable to reach his knife.

Abruptly, Lhon Otai felt Gurd go limp in his grasp. A shrill wail echoed from the hunter's lips. Lhon Otai had heard such a call before and in sudden alarm he glanced over his shoulder.

From some rocks a few feet away bounded the gray form of a lean lynx. Gurd's friend of the tundras had heard the call which meant food to him, and he had not eaten for three days. Lhon Otai shivered with terror, for the Tatars were still too far away to aid him. Loosening his grip of the hunter he sprang to his feet, grasping at the stirrup of his horse, which was dancing in terror.

At once Gurd was on his feet. A swift glance at the approaching men warned him of his peril. He leaped into the saddle of the reindeer which had recovered its balance while the two men were on the ground.

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"That was an ill deed, Lhon Otai," he growled, "and I will not forget."

Wheeling his mount he bent low to avoid the arrows which the Tatars sped after him. The reindeer trotted swiftly out of range, but the pack-animals which tried to follow, fell under the arrows.

The gray lynx hesitated, snarling. Then it bounded after Gurd, and in a moment hunter, reindeer and lynx were lost to sight in the firs.

VI

What is the measure of a warrior?

Is it the strong sword, with finely jeweled hilt; or the well-balanced spear with gleaming point that can shear through silvered mail? Is it the war-horse that spurns the earth and pants in eagerness for battle?

Is it the chased armor, spoils from slain enemies, renowned in minstrel's song? Or the crafty brain, quick to devise stratagems of war?

Nay, it is the heart beneath the mail!

Tatar song.

KHLIT, the Kha Khan, surnamed the Wolf, followed far the chase over the snow-covered ground. A pair of leopards with dragging leash sped before him, their black noses close over the tracks of a deer. Khlit had left the other horsemen behind and galloped close after the leopards, through the pine forest of Khantai Khan, near Changa Nor.

But the eyes of the Cossack were not on the trained leopards. The reins hung loose on the neck of his horse, which followed the beasts from habit. He paid no heed to an unhooded falcon which clutched the glove on his wrist and flapped encouragement to the leopards.

Khlit's mind was heavy with care. Nearly two months had passed since he had left Changa Nor after the unsuccessful assault. His envoy had returned from the invading Kallmarks with the reply he expected—an insolent refusal to leave the lands of the Jun-gar.

Chepé Buga and Berang had been exerting every effort to gather the fighting men of the hordes together. But they had been strangely unsuccessful. The warriors told them that the Winter season was at hand, when their flocks and herds must be guarded against the wandering wolf packs that came south in the track of the reindeer herds. The men of the Ordus and Chakars seemed to have lost heart for fighting. Khlit had never known them to hold back before when a battle was in the wind. Vainly his shrewd mind sought for the cause.

The encampment at Lake Baikal numbered fewer fighting men than in the Summer. And the Kallmarks were advancing, driving their herds and taking possession of the stores of hay and grain the Jun-gar Tatars had laid up for the Winter.

The *shamans* who held great power among the Tatars were loath to help Khlit assemble his regiments because he had sent Lhon Otai to the North, whence the leader of the conjurers had not yet returned.

Although the ice was forming over Changa Lake, Khlit had not dared to venture the assault of the castle until he had more men under his command. The few who had been held together by Chepé Buga, Berang, and the mighty Chagan had been filled with stories of the treasure they were to seize at Changa Nor. Khlit dared not fail of taking the castle. He dreaded to think that it might not hold the wealth they suspected. Yet evidence had been flowing in from all quarters of the treasure. Fishermen on Lake Changa had heard of it. Old men had seen caskets carried there.

Khlit was aroused from his reverie by a whimper of eagerness from the leopards. The lithe beasts had swung into a fast run that pressed his horse to keep up. Khlit, searching the tracks they were following, thought that he noticed a difference in them. The next moment he reined in his horse sharply.

From behind the trunks of two giant trees in front of him, a rider had stepped out. Khlit saw a tall man, closely wrapped in a *malitza* of lynx skin, with the hood drawn over his head. The face was veiled by the hood, but Khlit saw a firm mouth, and a pair of steady, dark eyes. He noted that the man carried no weapon save a large hunting-knife, and that he appeared careless of the leopards which had drawn back, snarling when they scented the man.

The stranger was mounted on a reindeer, and Khlit guessed swiftly that the leopards had been following the latter, having changed from the tracks of the deer to fresher scent. He uttered a sharp word of command to the crouching beasts, and walked his horse forward slowly, his hand on the hilt of his sword.

The brown-faced man raised a mittened hand, the fringe of his glove ornamented with reindeer ears. Khlit waited.

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"My name is Gurd, the hunter," the stranger spoke in a deep voice.

"I am Khlit, called by my enemies the Wolf," answered the Kha Khan at once.

"Aye," said Gurd, "I saw you lead the hunt and crossed the tracks of your quarry, for you were alone."

Khlit's shrewd glance swept the near-forest for signs of a possible ambush and rested, reassured, on the hunter. The two men measured each other with frank curiosity. Gurd marked the rich, sable cloak of the Kha Khan, the copper and silver chasing of his saddle, and his deep-set eyes under tufted brows. He appreciated the ease with which the old Cossack sat his horse, the smooth play of his broad shoulders.

On his part Khlit scanned the frank face of the hunter, his simple attire, and noted the boldness of his bearing. Being armed, he had Gurd at his mercy. Silently he waited for the other to speak.

"I have come unarmed," began Gurd in his deep voice, "to take you to Changa Nor. There is one at Changa Nor who must see the Kha Khan of the Jun-gar. Your men have hunted me through the Dead World. Yet I have come unarmed to bear you this message."

Khlit's mustache twitched in a hard smile.

"Does a wolf put his head into the noose of a trap, hunter?"

"No harm will come to you, Khlit. Would I risk my life to speak to you, if the need were not great? Nay, if you do not come, your sorrow will be greater than that of one who has killed his father by mischance, or broken his sword in dishonor."

"Hey, that is strange!" Khlit regarded his companion curiously. "Who is the one who sent you?"

Gurd hesitated.

"The master of Changa Nor, O Kha Khan. By the token around your neck, he said that you would come."

Khlit put his hand to his throat. Under the *svitza* he felt the outline of the gold cross he always wore. Was this the token? There were few who knew Khlit was a Christian. Who was the master of Changa Nor? He was eager to know, and to see the inside of the lonely castle.

"Lead on, rider of stags," he laughed lightly. "To the devil himself——"

VII

AT ONE of the embrasures of Changa Nor stood a young girl. She was slender and straight, with round, strong arms, and twin braids of red-gold hair bound at her forehead by a fillet of pearl. Her dark eyes were fixed on the shore. Her skin was olive, deepened by the sun's touch.

She leaned anxiously against the heavy stones of the embrasure, her delicate face thrust into the opening, peering out to the pines. At times she turned and glanced with a pretty, impatient frown at the sand clock in the chamber. Once a high voice from another room startled her. She listened a moment, and then, as if satisfied, returned to her watch.

The shadows were long from the pines on the shore when she made out two dark figures that rode down to the shore. Dismounting, the two men advanced out on the ice toward the castle. Pausing a moment to make sure that she was not mistaken in them, she left the embrasure and turned to the wall of the chamber.

Her fingers feeling deftly over the stone of the wall moved two sturdy iron bars from their rest with the ease of habit. These she laid aside. Clutching an iron lever that projected from the stone, she hung the weight of her slender body on this, moving it downward. At once two stone blocks to the height of a man swung inward, leaving space for a person to enter with difficulty.

The opening was blocked by a human form and in another moment Gurd the hunter stood within the chamber. He looked at her quickly and nodded as if in answer to an unspoken question. She flushed with pleasure and watched the tall figure of Khlit enter the room.

The Cossack glanced about him curiously, his hand on his sword. He looked only casually at the girl in spite of her beauty. She turned away at once, readjusted the stone blocks. The heavy bars, however, she did not replace, in her hurry to follow the men.

The three, led by Gurd, went from the chamber which acted as an anteroom into the long hall of the castle. An old servant in a faded leather jerkin bowed before them.

"Tell Atagon," commanded Gurd of the man, "that the Kha Khan is here."

Khlit glanced at the empty hall, with its

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faded tapestries and heavy furniture. The place had an air of antiquity, heightened by its silence. The hall stretched the entire length of the castle, and was lighted only by the narrow embrasures under which a gallery ran, as if for archers to stand, by the openings. The Cossack knew that the castle dated from many generations ago.

"A lonely place!" he grunted. "Where are the demons who tipped hell-fire on my men?"

Gurd smiled and pointed after the old servant.

"There is one of the demons, Gutchluk, the ancient," he said, " and here is the other—Chinsi, the grand-daughter of Atagon. When I am away from Changa Nor these two guard the castle, as you have seen."

Khlit glanced from Gurd to the slender, golden-haired girl.

"Devil take the place!" he swore. "A bed-ridden slave and a half-weaned girl! Nay, that can not be."

"It is so, lord," the girl's musical voice made answer. "Gurd has taught us to prepare and cast the Chinese fire from the window slits. Atagon brought the fire here for our protection, but he is too old——"

Gurd held up his hand for silence. He stepped to the side of the hall and drew back the tapestry that concealed another chamber.

"Here, O Kha Khan," he said slowly, "you shall learn the secret of Changa Nor. Truly, the secret belongs to you, as well as to us. Come."

Curiously, Khlit glanced from Gurd to Chinsi. The hunter's face was impassive, but the girl's eyes were alight with eagerness, and a kind of fear. Without hesitation Khlit stepped under the tapestry. He halted abruptly within the chamber.

It was a narrow room, scarcely illumined by the embrasure. A long table ran across the chamber in front of him. A single candle and a parchment were on the table.

By the candle Khlit saw the figure of an old man, in a long robe of white camel's-hair. The hood of the robe was thrown back, and he had a full view of the face of the man. He saw a high forehead, fringed with snowy hair, a pair of steadfast eyes, and a pale, lined countenance. A long beard, pure white in color, fell over the robe to the black girdle around the waist.

A rush of memory took Khlit back to the Cossack camp he had quitted many years ago. He had seen men like these, at the monastery of the Holy Spirit.

For a long moment the eyes of the Kha Khan and the man in the white robe challenged each other. The fierce gaze of the Cossack was fairly met by the mild light in Atagon's deep-set eyes.

"Welcome, Christian warrior—"Atagon raised a withered hand in greeting—"to Changa Nor. Long has Atagon, of Changa, been waiting your coming. God, through his servant Gurd, has led you to our gate, in the time of our need."

Incredulity and belief struggled in Khlit's mind. Atagon had spoken as a priest, haltingly as if using a language long unfamiliar. And Khlit had not revealed the fact that he was a Christian. But his gesture was that of a *batko*, a father-priest of the Orthodox church.

"I am Atagon," the calm voice of the priest went on," and so the Christians of my little flock call me. But I was baptized under the name of John, and I am presbyter of the church."

The two words stirred anew Khlit's memory. Presbyter John. Where had he heard that phrase before? The answer to his question came to him in a flash.

"Presbyter John!" he cried. "Prester John, of Asia. The king who was sought by missionaries! The guardian of hidden treasure, and the keeper of strange beasts——"

He had remembered the name of the king he had forgotten. The story of Prester John and the treasure had spread through Europe centuries ago. But the mythical king had never been seen. Was the aged Atagon the true descendant of Prester John? The monarch of the hidden treasure?

Atagon shook his head solemnly.

"Not Prester John, my son. But Presbyter. Your words are strange. I know nothing of treasure, or of beasts. I am the guardian of the Christian shrine of Cathay, beside the Sea of Sand."

Again Khlit was stirred. The Sea of Sand! Chepé Buga had mentioned that. And the Lake of Stones, which must be Changa Nor. Here was the place that the legend had named. Surely Atagon was Prester John!

"I see you are troubled with doubt, my son," smiled the patriarch. "Come, I will

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show you proof. You speak of treasure. There is no pagan gold on Changa Nor, but a treasure more precious. See."

Getting to his feet Atagon took up a staff which was fashioned like a shepherd's crook. He walked slowly to another door of the chamber which he pushed open, motioning for Khlit to follow. A light from the interior shone on his majestic face.

Khlit stepped beside the patriarch, and caught his breath in amazement. He stood in a shrine of the Christian church. In front of him candles glowed before an icon, a painting of Christ and the Virgin Mary; myriad gems sparkled from the frame of the icon. Below the painting stood a small cross. Khlit saw that it was a single stone, an emerald which shone with a soft light. He thought of the emerald scepter that the Tatars had said was in Changa Nor.

On a table in front of the icon were several jeweled caskets of lapis-lazuli set with rubies. The candle-sticks were gold, with jade blocks for their bases. Silk vestments hung from the walls, embroidered with gold and silver thread. Also a girdle with a clasp brilliant with diamonds.

The patriarch crossed himself. Khlit, in obedience to an old impulse, removed his fur cap.

"The treasure of the Gur-Khan," he muttered. "Aye, the legend was true."

VIII

A QUICK frown crossed Atagon's tranquil features.

"Nay, my son," he corrected, "the shrine of God in a pagan land. These riches are the offerings of the Gur-Khan to God, and their contents are the true treasures. The painting comes from Constantinople. The caskets shelter a portion of the garment of St. Paul, the wanderer, and a finger with a lock of hair of the blessed St. Thomas."

He motioned for Khlit to approach the shrine. The Cossack did so fearlessly. At the same time, his heart was heavy. Here was indeed a treasure, such as the khans were seeking. But it was a treasure of the church. And Khlit was a Christian.

"Harken, Kha Khan," spoke Gurd from the doorway, "said I not you must come to Changa Nor? The Tatars have wind of these riches and they plan to despoil the shrine of Atagon. They are pagans and care naught for the sacred relics, or for the holy cross. That was why I sought you, at the hunt. You can protect Changa Nor."

Khlit was silent, under the eyes of the three Christians. He had promised his men the treasure of Changa Nor. Khlit's life as a Cossack was past. He was now the leader of the khans. They had fought with him. His word was law in the horde. And he had promised them the riches of Changa Nor.

"Tell me," he said slowly, "is this truly the treasure of the Gur-Khan?"

Chinsi stepped forward.

"Father Atagon," she said, "knows the story of the treasure. But he does not know what the Tatars say of the legend. Gurd has told me. The Tatars say that centuries ago a Gur-Khan hid his treasure where it could not be found, by a sea of sand and a river of stones. They say it is guarded by fierce beasts."

"Aye," assented Khlit grimly, "that is what they told me."

The patriarch bowed his head in thought, stroking his beard gently.

"I will give you the answer you seek to your questions, my children," he observed at length. "Truly, I have heard the story of the beasts. The first presbyter told it to his successor. Considering it in the light of the holy word, I think it means that the beasts of the forest might, by the power of God, seek to guard the chosen ones of the true faith. Was it not so with Daniel and the lions?

"As to the story of the Gur-Khan," he went on, "it is true. The first Gur-Khan was converted by a presbyter from Europe —Olopan, who came from Judea. Obeying the mandates of a higher will, he turned his pagan treasures into offerings to God—as you see." He waved a white hand at the shrine and the table. "And so the treasure became hidden from the evil ones who sought it. The Gur-Khan was killed, and his empire broken up in battle. But his daughter, who was a Christian, survived and hid in the castle of Changa Nor with the treasure of the church, accompanied by the presbyter, and a few knights. Before the presbyter died, he ordained the most worthy of the knights to be his successor. And that patriarch in turn selected one to succeed him."

Atagon took the hand of the girl fondly.

"Behold, Kha Khan, the last princess of

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the line of the Gur-Khan, Chinsi, the golden-haired. And I, Atagon, am the last of the patriarchs. Truly my flock is small. For save Gurd, who ministers to our needs, there are only a few wandering Nestorians from Hsi'en-fu, in Shensi, who visit Changa Nor. It is they who spread the story of a treasure."

"Aye, father," grunted Khlit, "your fame is great, although you know it not. For you are the one men have sought by the name of Prester John. But the Tatars of the Jun-gar do not bow to the name of God. Their *shamans* say that Gurd is a hunter guided by an evil spirit; and that Changa Nor is a refuge of the devil himself, with all his brimstone."

"Nay, Kha Khan," Gurd showed his white teeth in a smile. "That is because I fetch *mamut* tusks from the Dead World, where Tatar hunters go not. And the *shamans* call this a haunt of the devil, for they have tried for many years to take our treasure. Lhon Otai's palms itch for these jewels."

"That is not all, O Kha Khan," cried the girl defiantly. "Gurd who brings us candles and firewood with food and drink has fought for his life against the *shamans* more than once. He brought you here at peril of death for the Tatar warriors have been told he is a son of the were-wolves, an evil spirit."

"No matter, Chinsi," laughed Gurd lightly, "now that I have brought you a better protector. Khlit, the Kha Khan, will guard us for he is also a Christian."

The eyes of the patriarch sought Khlit shrewdly. Pride was in his glance, and hope, but also uncertainty. Khlit raised his head.

"Harkén," he said; his keen ears had caught a sound without the castle.

Footsteps pattered to the door of the shrine. Gutchluk appeared.

"Riders are coming over the lake, Father," he cried. "They are coming very swiftly."

Chinsi gave a startled cry. Atagon and Gurd turned to her in surprise.

"The door!" she whispered. "I forgot to put up the bars. It can be opened from without."

Gurd sprang to the door. Then he halted. The sound of many boots echoed on the stone floor of the hall. The hunter glared at Khlit.

"What is this? You knew—"

"I know not," growled Khlit.

As he spoke he remembered that his companions must have followed in his tracks, seeking the end of the hunt. The footsteps grew louder without. A shout rang through the castle. Atagon took up his staff and stepped to the door. Gurd drew his knife and placed himself before the priest.

"Fool!" hissed Gurd to the trembling Gutchluk. "Why did you not see to the door? Hush! They may not find the entrance under the tapestry."

"I left it open, lord," muttered the servant. "How could men enter Changa Nor?"

A cry announced that the men without had found the opening into the adjoining chamber. There was a quick tread of feet. Khlit's hand went to his sword. Then it fell to his side.

In the entrance to the shrine appeared the giant form of a man in armor. Chagan the swordbearer entered, dragging back with all his strength at the leash which held the two straining leopards. Behind the hunting beasts appeared Chepé Buga's swarthy countenance. A *shaman* and a half-dozen warriors blocked the door behind the khan.

Chepé Buga threw a keen glance at the group in the shrine.

"Ha, Khlit, lord," he growled, "we followed the leopards which were by the horses at the edge of the lake to the wall of Changa. When we pushed against the stones where they smelt, the wall gave in, by cursed witchcraft. Glad am I to see you alive. We thought the devils of Changa had borne you off to Satan's bonfire."

Chagan gave a cry and pointed to the treasures of the shrine. Chepé Buga's eye lighted gleefully.

"By the mighty beard of Afrasiab!" he swore. "Here is a pretty sight. Nay, the Wolf has led us as he promised without bloodshed to the treasure of Changa Nor."

His glance fell on Gurd and Chinsi, and he gave a hearty laugh.

"What! Here is the devil-hunter, ripe for the torture, and a maid, for our sport. By Satan's cloven hoof, that was well done, Khlit, lord!"

Their eyes aflame with greed, the Tatars echoed their khan's words with a shout that rang through the castle of Changa, and caused the leopards to snarl.

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IX

A poisonous vine hanging upon a strong cedar —such is a traitor at the gate of a king.

Chinese proverb.

GURD had been reared in the forest, among animals quick to slay. He had had all men for his enemies, save the few at Changa Nor. So, while he possessed the patience of the animals he hunted, he had also their fierce anger. Chepé Buga's mocking words brought a flush to his brown cheeks, and before any one could move he had drawn the knife at his girdle.

The Tatar khan had no time to lift this sword. Gurd was upon him with gleaming knife, when Atagon, who had anticipated the hunter's movement, thrust his staff against the latter's chest. Held away from his enemy, Gurd glared at Chepé Buga with blazing eyes. The Tatar returned his gaze with cool insolence. Atagon placed his hand on his companion's shoulder.

"Peace, my son," he said quietly. "It is not fitting that blood should flow because of a hasty word. We must not quarrel in the shrine of God. Let me speak to this man."

Chepé Buga eyed the patriarch in astonishment, which deepened into disgust. The proud words of the priest had no effect on him.

"Who are you, Graybeard?" he growled. "And who is the girl?"

Khlit spoke for the first time.

"This is Atagon," he said, "master of Changa Nor. And the woman is Chinsi, daughter of a Gur-Khan."

Chepé Buga stared at the girl's delicate face and ruddy hair in open approval. Gurd ground his teeth as he caught the glance, but the hand of Atagon restrained him.

"Aye, she bears herself like a princess, Khlit, lord," assented the Tatar carelessly. "She is worthy of a better master than this thin-blooded priest, or yon scowling hunter. I will give up my share of the jewels for her. Hey, there is a pretty emerald!"

He walked to the cross and balanced it tentatively in his hand. Atagon lifted his hand in protest.

"Take the caskets," cried the *shaman* from the door; "they are priceless!"

"Nay," cried Atagon, "touch them not. They hold sacred relics."

Some of the Tatars drew back from the door at this. But Chepé Buga did not move.

"A curse upon your quaverings, dogs," he growled. "String the old man up by his thumbs, and take the knife from the hunter. He is overquick to use it."

"Nay," Atagon responded at once. "There is no charm, save the wrath of God upon the despoiler. But have a care what you do, Tatar. There is one whom you may offend."

"Where?" The khan glanced idly about the chamber. "I see him not, unless you mean yon Gurd of the scowling brow. He will make good eating for the leopards, Chagan."

"Not he," responded Atagon. The patriarch pointed to Khlit who was watching moodily. "The Kha Khan has not said that you may take these things. They belong not to me, but to God. Have a fear what you do, Khan, for your master knows the name of God."

All eyes were fixed on Khlit. Gurd folded his arms and glanced at the intruders blackly. He had not forgotten it was his doing that they came here, in Khlit's tracks. The girl clasped her hands in silent appeal.

Chepé Buga's face bore a look of sincere astonishment. He cared nothing for the deities of the *shamans*, or for others. It had not occurred to him that Khlit would hesitate to seize the treasure. Had the Kha Khan not promised he would do so?

"Speak, Khlit, lord," he cried, "and bid us close the mouth of this long-robed conjurer with a sword. Then he will trouble us no more."

But Khlit was silent. It had been long since he had seen a cross other than the one he wore around his neck, or the candles burning before an icon. He had been a wanderer, far from the church. Yet he knew that his faith was alive in his heart. To refuse Chepé Buga and his companions permission to take the treasure of Changa Nor would mean protest, discontent, a weakening of the small force of Tatars which was still at his command. It would be hard, even dangerous. He had given his word that the treasure of Changa Nor would be theirs before he knew its nature. How was he to do otherwise?

"Remember your promise, O Kha Khan," the voice of the *shaman* cried from the group at the door.

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Khlit whipped out his sword on the instant.

"Bring me that knave!" he cried.

The Tatar warriors turned, but the *shaman* had slipped away into the shadows of the outer chamber. They returned empty-handed after a hurried search through the castle.

"Such words are spoken by cowards," said Khlit grimly. "I love not to be told to keep my word. Did I not keep my promise when I led the khans against Hang-Hi at Altai Haiten? Was not my word true when I brought you to the army of Li Jusong? Speak!"

"Aye, lord," cried Chagan's deep voice. "It was true."

"What I have sworn," said Khlit, "I will carry out."

He sheathed his sword. Stepping to Chepé Buga's side he replaced the emerald cross on the altar of the shrine. The Tatars watched him in silence. Atagon closed his eyes as if in prayer. Khlit faced his men, his back to the shrine. His shaggy brows were close knitted in thought.

"Harken, warriors of the Jun-gar," he growled. "What did I say to you by the shore of Changa lake? I promised that the castle should be taken without bloodshed. Have we not done so? I said it would be ours when the lake was coated with ice. Is it not covered with ice today?"

"Aye, but you promised us the treasure, Khlit, lord," spoke one of the men respectfully.

Khlit's keen eye flashed, and he tapped his sword angrily.

"And is not the treasure ours?" he asked. Gurd made an angry movement, but Atagon motioned him back. "We have it in our hands. Nay, I will tell you more. It was decided in the *kurultai* that we would use the money to buy back our lands from the Kallmark invaders. That would not be wise. I thought so at the time, and now I will speak my reason. Who would buy back what is theirs—save a whipped slave? If we pay the treasure to the Kallmarks, they will be back next Summer for more."

"Aye, that is well said," nodded Chepé Buga.

"But what of the Kallmarks?" objected Chagan. "Riders have come to us in the last few days who say that the Kallmarks are riding north with two thousand men."

Khlit stroked the curved scabbard at his side thoughtfully. He knew as well as Chagan the numbers and strength of the Kallmarks who were bent on the destruction of the horde of the Jun-gar.

"Have the hearts of the Jun-gar turned weak as women?" he made reply. "Nay, it is the Kallmarks who will pay for their invasion. We will keep the treasure of Changa Nor."

"Then let us take it to the camp by Lake Baikal," broke in Chepé Buga, "where it will be in our hands."

"Is not the Kha Khan, Chepé Buga," growled Khlit, "the one to say what we will do with the treasure? Nay, where is there a better place or one more secure than Changa Nor?"

"We got into here," protested the khan stubbornly, "by good hap, and the scent of our leopards. It is a hard nut to crack, this castle. Who knows whether we can get in again?"

Khlit stroked his mustache and frowned. His purpose to safeguard the treasure of Atagon was hard to carry out.

"We will leave a guard here over the treasure, Chepé Buga," he said at length. "Chagan will stay. Gurd will come with us, so that the swordbearer will have no foe within the castle. Then, when we return, we may decide about the treasure."

"And the pay for our horsemen?" cried one of the Tatars. "The money for powder and new weapons?"

"We will take spoil from the Kallmarks." Chagan nodded heavily.

"But how may we turn them back? They are many, and strong!"

"With this." Khlit drew his sword with a quick motion and laid it on the table. "Aye, by the sword of Kaidu, the hero and guardian of the Jun-gar, we will drive back the Kallmarks, and take their herds."

The words and the act appealed to the war-like feelings of the Tatar throng. With one voice they gave a ringing shout of approval. Khlit smiled grimly. Without earning the ill-will of the khans he had achieved what he wanted—time, and the safety of the shrine of Changa Nor.

As he was about to pick up his sword, the group by the door parted. In strode the portly figure of the *shaman*, Lhon Otai, accompanied by the man who had fled a few minutes before.

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X

THE slant eyes of Lhon Otai glinted shrewdly as he surveyed the men in the shrine. His words came smoothly and softly from his thick lips.

"Where are your wits, men of the Jungar?" he cried. "The evil spirits of Changa Nor have cast a spell over you. You are blinded by an unclean charm. It is well I came to save you from the dangers of this place."

The Tatars glanced uneasily at each other. The chief of the *shamans* knew well his power over them. He pointed angrily to Khlit.

"Aye, the evil priest of the *caphars* has bewitched you. Know you not this man who calls himself the Kha Khan is a Christian? He will not give you the treasure. He has deceived you with lying words."

Chagan stared at Khlit blankly.

"Nay, lord," he protested, "tell them this is not so. How can a Kha Khan of the Jun-gar be a Christian?"

A murmur of assent came from the warriors. Lhon Otai crossed his stout arms with a triumphant smile. His glance swept from Gurd to Khlit and back again.

"It is so," he said. "Your chief is a *caphar*, a brother in faith to yon dark hunter who is allied to evil spirits. The place here is accursed. I have come from the North, where I saw this hunter Gurd talk to a lynx of the forest as his brother, and summon ivory bones from the ground by a dark spell. By my power I overcame him and took the ivory. Then I hurried here to safeguard you against the *caphars*."

Gurd smiled scornfully, but the Tatars had eyes for no one but Khlit.

"Speak, lord," said Chagan again, "and tell us this is not true."

Khlit surveyed his followers moodily. He knew that they were superstitious, and under the influence of the *shamans*. He had only to deny his faith, and all would be well. Lhon Otai would be silenced.

The *shaman* had long been Khlit's enemy, for he was jealous of the Cossack's power. Khlit wondered if Lhon Otai had seen the gold cross he carried under his *svitza*. The conjurer and his followers had spies everywhere and there was little in central Asia that they did not know.

And Lhon Otai had chosen the moment well. Khlit had already risked his popularity with the khans by holding back the treasure of Changa Nor from their hands. Probably the *shamans* who accompanied Lhon Otai had told the latter what had passed in the shrine of Atagon. Khlit decided to make one more bid for favor with his followers.

"Nay, Chagan," he said slowly, "do you tell me this. Have I failed in my duty to the khans? Have the Jun-gar ever gone to defeat under my leadership? Let the *kurultai* of the Jun-gar decide. I will abide by their word. If they say that I have done ill, I will give over my command to Chepé Buga."

"He speaks with a double tongue!" cried Lhon Otai, seizing his advantage cleverly. "For he has kept the treasure of Changa Nor for himself and the *caphar* priest. This treasure would buy your lands from the Kallmarks. He sent me to the Dead World, where the hunter Gurd tried to slay me——"

"A lie!" cried Gurd. "I knew not the Kha Khan. It was Lhon Otai who followed me, and slew my reindeer by treachery."

"Nay, then," put in the other *shaman* swiftly, "if Khlit knew you not, how comes he here, with the *caphars*, unknown to the khans?"

Chepé Buga waved his heavy hand for silence.

"Say one word, Khlit, lord," he bellowed, "and we will boil this conjurer's tongue in oil."

Khlit glanced wearily from under shaggy brows at his comrade in arms. His pride was great, and he had no fear for himself, despite the hostility of Lhon Otai. But he feared for the shrine of Atagon.

"Nay, Chepé Buga," he said, "I am a Christian."

A stunned silence greeted this. A proud light shone in the eyes of Atagon. Lhon Otai was not slow to seize his advantage. His cunning was a match for Khlit's craft.

"Come!" he cried, raising both arms. "You have heard. This is a place of evil. We will drive out the dark spirits in the manner of our fathers and their fathers before them. Come! A sword-dance. We will purge the place."

He ran from the chamber, followed by the Tatar warriors and the other *shaman*. Chagan was next to go, dragging the two leopards with him. At a sign from Atagon, Gurd and the girl Chinsi accompanied the

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priest without. Khlit and Chepé Buga remained. The Cossack stretched out his hand to Chepé Buga.

"Speak, *anda*, brother in arms," he said gruffly, "what matters my faith to you? We have fought together and shared the same bed. Will you leave me for the fat conjurer?"

The Tatar's handsome face twisted in vexation.

"I swore to follow you, O Kha Khan," he said slowly, "to be at the front in every battle, to bring the horses and spoil we captured to you, to beat the wild beasts for your hunting, to give you to eat of the game I took in hunting, and to guard you from danger with my sword. Christian or not, I remember my oath. Yet, we have need of the treasure of Changa Nor. Bid us take the treasure, that we may know your heart is with us."

Khlit turned away from the appeal in his friend's eyes. He made as if to speak; then his head dropped on his chest. He was silent. He heard the Tatar leave the shrine.

When he looked up he saw that he was alone with the icon and the flickering candles on the altar.

XI

IN THE hall of Changa Nor, Lhon Otai mustered the Tatars for the sword-dance. Two tall candles gave the only light in the long chamber, for it had grown dark outside the castle. When Khlit entered the hall, he saw that Atagon and the Christians had taken their places in the balcony. The Tatars, who had drawn their swords, occupied the floor. Lhon Otai faced them at the farther end.

Even Chagan had taken his place with Chepé Buga in the ranks of the warriors, after tying his leopards fast to a pillar. The Tatars watched eagerly while Lhon Otai took from the pouch at his girdle a human skull fashioned into a drinking cup. Then he summoned the trembling Gutchluk to bring him wine. With this he filled the cup.

Lhon Otai bent nine times in homage to the west, where the sun had set. The Tatars lifted their swords with a single shout.

"Heigh!"

The *shaman's* heavy face was alight with triumph. He placed his girdle across his shoulders and poured out a little wine from the cup to the floor.

"Precious wine I pour to Natagai," he chanted, "I give the *tarasun* to the god Natagai."

The warriors swung their swords overhead.

"Heigh!"

Lhon Otai tipped the cup again.

"An offering I pour to Meik," he sang, "to Meik, guardian of the forest."

"Heigh!" cried the Tatars.

They bent their bodies, lowering their swords. Then they came erect, swinging their shining blades above their heads. Khlit knew the fascination the sword-dance held for them. Already they were breathing more quickly.

"Wine I pour to the *Cheooki* gods, to the *Cheooki* gods of the North who light the sky with their fire."

"Heigh!"

An echo of music sounded in the hall. The other *shaman* had drawn a *dombra* from under his cloak, and was striking upon it. As the sword-dance, led by Lhon Otai, continued, the Tatars became more excited. They bent their bodies and circled three times. Then they raised their blades with a shout.

"Heigh!"

Lhon Otai now stood erect, his face raised to the rafters, his eyes closed. When the Tatars saw this their shout changed.

"A wisdom!" they cried. "Our *shaman* sees the raven in the rafters. He is listening to the words of wisdom."

At this they ran to the sides of the hall, and returned, raising their swords in concert. To the strains of the *dombra* they circled, making their blades play about their heads. Sweat shone on their brows. Their teeth gleamed through their mustaches.

Khlit watched impassively. He saw that Lhon Otai was working the warriors to a pitch of excitement. It would be useless for him to interrupt the sword-dance. Yet his fear was not so much for himself as for the group watching silently from the balcony.

Then Lhon Otai raised his arms. The sound of the *dombra* ceased. The Tatars lowered their swords and waited, panting from their exertions.

"A wisdom!" cried Lhon Otai in a high voice, his eyes still closed.

"A wisdom!" echoed the warriors. "Tell us the word of the raven."

The *shaman* crossed his arms over his chest.

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"Danger is near the horde of the Jun-gar," he chanted. "The soul of Ghenghis Khan mutters in his tomb, and the sun is darkened in night. The treasure of Changa Nor must be our safeguard. With it we will buy our homes and our pastures from the Kallmarks. We will send riders to the camp of the khan Berang by Lake Baikal and bid him disband the horde. Thus will the Kallmark chieftains know we mean friendship."

Khlit made a gesture of protest unheeded by the Tatars who were hanging on the words of the *shaman*.

"Evil omens are afoot," went on Lhon Otai. "Dead fish infest the ice of Baikal under the three Diandas. The great wolf pack of the North is hunting for its prey. Evil is the plight of the Jun-gar, owing to the false words of a Christian. Bind the arms of the Christian Kha Khan with stout ropes, that he may not harm us again. Him we must leave in Changa Nor. The *shamans* with the khan Chepé Buga and the swordbearer Chagan must watch over the treasure, until the army at the Baikal camp can be disbanded."

Khlit thrust out his arms in grim silence, to be bound, while Chepé Buga watched. The khan glanced at him uneasily while they tied his hands but avoided meeting Khlit's eye. Only once Khlit spoke.

"These hands carried the standard of Ghenghis Khan," he growled. "Who will lead the Jun-gar if I am bound? Yon fat toad?"

Lhon Otai's broad face twisted in anger, and his eyes flew open. At a sign from him the *shaman* bound Khlit's arms close to his side.

"Harken, Tatars!"

The words, in a clear voice from the gallery made them look up. Gurd was leaning on the stone railing, his heavy hands clutching the barrier. His dark face was bent down. His eyes were glowing.

"You know the legend of Changa Nor, Lhon Otai," went on Gurd. "How is it that for ten lifetimes the treasure of Changa Nor has not been touched? Others have tried to take it. And they have died. No pagan has lived who put hand to the sanctuary of God, in Changa Nor. Nay, not one. Yet we have no swordsmen or archers here to defend the treasure. They have died from another cause."

"The Chinese fire!" cried the *shaman* contemptuously. "We can deal with such sorcery."

"Nay, it is not the fire, Lhon Otai. You know the legend. Changa Nor is guarded by a power greater than your swords. Death awaits you in the shadows of the castle. Tempt it not. I give you this warning. There is a curse upon the foe of Changa Nor, and upon his children and his herds. I have seen men die from this curse. Brave men."

"Kill me that rascal!" cried Lhon Otai to his followers.

With the exception of Chepé Buga and Chagan the Tatars rushed for the stairway leading to the gallery.

"I have seen you touch the treasure of the shrine," Gurd called to Chepé Buga. Pointing at Lhon Otai he added, heedless of the rush of his enemies, "And I can see the mark of death on your forehead."

Chepé Buga laughed lightly, while the *shaman* glared at Gurd vindictively. The Tatar warriors had gained the gallery. They cut down the old Gutchluk who stood in their way and rushed toward Gurd.

As their swords were lifted to strike him, the hunter sprang over the railing. Hanging by his hands an instant from the balcony, he leaped to the stone floor below. He landed lightly, for all his great size.

Chagan drew his two-handed sword and stepped toward Gurd. The latter crouched and dodged the sweep of the sword. Grappling with the mighty swordbearer he flung Chagan headlong to the floor. The Tatars were returning down the stairs, unwilling to take Gurd's daring leap from the gallery.

The hunter darted swiftly toward the chamber where the door opened to the lake. His pursurers were after him in a moment, but he had vanished in the darkness. Chagan stumbled to his feet.

"Back, fools!" he roared. "We will deal with the hunter as he deserves. He is unarmed. Watch."

While speaking, he loosed the two leopards. The beasts were infuriated by the excitement, and at Chagan's bidding they bounded after the man whom they had trailed earlier in the afternoon. The men in the hall listened, but no sound came from the lake without, where the trained leopards were already on Gurd's tracks.

"They will feed well tonight," laughed the swordbearer. "May Satan roast me, if yon *caphar* will live to curse you more, Lhon Otai."

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"He spoke words like the point of a sharp sword," said Chepé Buga grimly, with a sidelong glance at where Chinsi crouched by Atagon in the gallery. "Nay, Lhon Otai, if the curse comes true I shall have good company. You and I will dance together in Satan's court. But until then, bethink yourself well, Conjurer, for I too am master here. Chagan obeys me."

As Lhon Otai was about to answer, his mouth fell open in sheer astonishment. His eyes widened, and he pointed to the door of the chamber whence Gurd had fled.

Four spots of green light showed where the leopards were returning in the gloom. The animals issued into the hall. But they came slowly, crawling along the floor, their bellies dragging on the stone, and their tails limp underfoot. Every movement of their lithe bodies bespoke fear.

When the Tatars had recovered from their surprise at the return of the leopards they searched the lake and the surrounding shore. They followed Gurd's tracks up one of the hills. But there tracks and hunter alike disappeared. Gurd had gone into the mountains, and with him he had taken his entire herd of reindeer.

XII

FROM the summit of the tower of Changa Nor Chinsi and Khlit looked out over the frozen lake and the snow-clad hills. A cold wind nipped at their cheeks and stirred the girl's gold plaits of hair. Khlit watched her curiously as she stared at the hills, her smooth chin resting pensively on a strong, round hand.

Two days they had been prisoners in Changa. All the Tatars except Chepé Buga and Chagan had left for the Baikal encampment, under Lhon Otai's orders. The *shaman* himself remained at Changa. The treasure, thanks to the vigilance of Chepé Buga and Chagan, was untouched.

Chinsi and Atagon had not been further molested. Since Gutchluk's death, Chagan had attended to their wants after a fashion. The patriarch, however, had kept himself shut up in the shrine where he passed most of the time in prayer. Chepé Buga roamed restlessly over the castle, inspecting the apparatus for defense and visiting the treasure where he spent hours in fingering the jewels, which he took good care Lhon Otai did not disturb.

Khlit touched the girl on the sleeve of her reindeer-skin parka.

"Tell me, little Sparrow," he observed, "what is this curse Gurd called down upon Lhon Otai?"

Chinsi glanced around to see if they were alone. It was some time before she answered.

"The curse is part of the legend of Prester John, father. The legend runs that there were beasts that watched over the treasure long ago. It must be merely a fable; for how could that be true? Yet one thing I have seen. It was when I was a child. A band of robbers came to Changa when the lake was frozen over. It was in the night. We would not let them in. They tried to climb over the walls. Presently I heard them screaming. They were crying out, as if in pain."

"The Chinese fire, Chinsi," suggested Khlit.

"Nay, we had not used the fire. Gurd was in the castle when they came. Then he left. In the morning I saw their bodies. The men were horribly torn and mangled. The snow was red with their blood. They lay as if they had fallen while running from the castle. But I saw other tracks in the snow."

"They might have been horses, little sparrow," grunted Khlit.

"Nay, they were not horses' tracks. I was too young to know what they were. Gurd would not tell me. He has always watched over the castle."

Khlit puffed at his pipe in silence for a while.

"Gurd is a brave man," he said, "although he does not carry a sword as a warrior should. But I fear he can not avail against the men who hold Changa Nor today. Lhon Otai is shrewd."

"Aye," said the girl, tossing her curls proudly, "but Gurd is feared through all the Khantai Khan Mountains. Because his enemies can not kill him, they say he is allied to the beasts."

"Your tongue betrays its secret, Chinsi," smiled Khlit. "Devil take me, if you want not this stout fellow Gurd for a husband."

The girl flushed and lowered her gaze.

"It is Atagon's will," she said simply.

"Aye, and yours too," chuckled Khlit.

The girl made haste to speak of another subject.

"You spoke the name of Lhon Otai,

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father," she said quickly. "Before he leaped from the gallery, Gurd whispered something to me. He bade me tell you to beware of the *shaman*. Not until now have I had a chance to tell you."

"Nay, I need no warning, little Sparrow. Lhon Otai held power in the Jun-gar until I came. He has hated me since the day I joined the ranks of the khans. Not until now could he break my power in the Jun-gar. Yet Chepé Buga remains, who loves him not. Wherefore, I wonder that Lhon Otai bade the khan stay at Changa Nor. Nay, I fear not the conjuring dog. But your peril, little Chinsi, is greater."

"You were brave, father," said the girl softly, "to speak your faith as you did. Atagon has mentioned you in his prayers to God."

"Let him pray for himself," growled Khlit who was impatient of praise. "The *batko* stands near to death. I can do little more for him."

The girl was silent at this. Woman-like, she realized Khlit's rugged nature, that scorned weakness. At the same time she knew that the Cossack would defend the priest of his faith to the death. He craved no sympathy, and rebuked the advances of Atagon. He did not like to speak of his sacrifice for the patriarch. At the same time, she had seen him hold up his gold cross to be blessed by Atagon.

"That is not all Gurd told me," resumed the girl. "In the Northern forest when Lhon Otai was hunting him, he heard the *shaman* talk of his plans to the other Tatars. Lhon Otai said that they had sent one man south——"

A step sounded behind the girl, and she broke off. At Khlit's exclamation, she put her finger to her lips.

"Later, I will tell you, Khlit, father."

The lithe form of Chepé Buga appeared beside them. The khan, who had polished the metal ornaments of his costume and combed his black hair into sleek submission, stared at the slender girl with bold admiration.

"By the mighty beard of Afrasiab," he swore, "you are as hard to find as a live heron on a falcon's roost, Chinsi. The old priest guards you as he would his own life. May the devil mate with me but you are a likely girl!"

Chinsi stamped her booted foot angrily.

"Aye, I have heard you prowling through the castle, like a dog that fears to be seen. And Lhon Otai has stood and mocked Atagon at his prayers."

"Atagon has not much longer to pray, Chinsi," responded the khan idly. "Lhon Otai has told me that when his men come to the castle there will be another sword-dance and the blood of the old priest will be shed as an offering to Natagai."

The girl shivered. At this Chepé Buga stepped close to her, his dark eyes glowing. He caught her chin in a stalwart hand.

"Nay, Chinsi, I would taste of your golden sweetness. Come, a kiss!"

Khlit looked up. But at sight of the girl the Cossack paused. Chinsi's dark eyes were blazing with anger and her cheeks were scarlet.

"Dog!" she whispered. "You are brave when Gurd is not here."

Sheer astonishment showed in the khan's handsome face, and his hand dropped as if he had touched a burning brand.

"That swordless hunter!" He bared his teeth in a hard smile. "If your hero comes back to Changa I will tear out his throat for him with my hands—since he carries no weapon. Nay, Khlit, these be strange folk—never have I taken captives who were so stubborn. The old Atagon watches jealously when Lhon Otai fingers the jewels in the treasure-chamber, although the *shaman* cherishes them like a mare with her first colt. And now the girl prates to me of the hunter who rides reindeer and tames wolves."

He shrugged his shoulders in chagrin.

"I had forgotten the reason I sought you, Chinsi. I looked by chance into the arms chest where you kept the Chinese fire, and the iron flagons for preparing it. The chest was empty. Nay, you are beautiful as a Spring sunrise on the Kerulon, Chinsi, but I have no liking for a baptism of fire from your pretty hands some night when I walk under the gallery. Where have you put the contrivance?"

Khlit glanced at the girl quickly. But she returned their look frankly.

"I have not been near the chest," she said coldly.

Chepé Buga eyed her meditatively.

"Your words have the ring of truth. And I searched your sleeping-chamber before coming here. But Atagon?"

"He knows or cares nothing about the fire."

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Chepé Buga glanced instinctively at Khlit. Then he looked away in shame.

"I meant not to doubt you, Khlit, lord," he said gravely. "Come, let me cut away those ropes. It is not fitting that the Kha Khan be bound."

"Nay, Khan," responded Khlit, "your *shaman* would put them back again. He has made us enemies, you and I, who fought together."

Before Chepé Buga could reply, a faint sound came to them over the hills.

"The howl of wolves," said Khlit.

"It is well we are behind walls," assented the khan. "I have seen some dark forms yonder in the pines, whether wolves or not."

The sound was heard by Chagan the sword-bearer, seated in the hall of the castle. He raised his head hastily. As he did so he caught sight of a figure moving along the wall toward the chamber of Atagon.

Chagan half rose to his feet. Then he saw that it was Lhon Otai. The *shaman* paused when he perceived Chagan's glance on him, and retraced his steps, away from Atagon's door.

Chagan caught a gleam of steel in the other's hand. But he shook his shoulders indifferently. It was none of his affair what Lhon Otai did.

Again the howl of a wolf echoed through the castle. This time Lhon Otai turned toward the gallery. He looked long from a casement, over the hills. Then he slipped the dagger he carried back in his girdle. And Chagan wondered, for a smile wreathed the broad cheeks of the *shaman*.

XIII

If a warrior dies, how may his friend aid him? A man's life goes out like a candle in the wind. His limbs are empty as the branches of a dead birch tree. But his friend may carry the body from the field of battle. Aye, so it may not be eaten by beasts.

Tatar saying.

FROM the window of her sleeping chamber Chinsi the golden-haired looked out over the snow, where Gurd had disappeared. It was the night after her talk with Khlit on the tower, and she had been crying. She still wore the reindeer coat for there were few fires in the castle of Changa, and at present a keen wind was sweeping through the rooms.

Chinsi drew her parka close over her shoulders, wondering where the air could have entered the castle. The arrow slits were too small to create a draft. But what she saw without the window held her attention.

In the shadow of the pines on the shore of the lake she observed a movement. A dark body passed from one tree trunk to another. She saw another body follow it and another.

Her first thought was of Gurd. The hunter had been gone nearly three days. There had been no sign of his presence around the lake, although Chinsi had watched with the persistent hope of those who are in danger. She wondered if the moving forms could be the hunter's reindeer. Then she thought with a shudder of the wolf pack which passed that way from the North in the early Winter. Gurd had taught her to watch for the beasts which were ferocious from hunger, and bold by reason of the numbers of the huge pack.

What she saw among the pines made her press close to the window. She saw a man's figure, outlined against the snow, going from the castle toward the shore. Presently the man disappeared under the pines.

So intent was she that she did not hear a stealthy step in the chamber, as Chepé Buga entered, closing the door noiselessly behind him. Before she had realized that another was in the room the Tatar had gained her side and thrown his arms around her. The girl's slender form stiffened in fright. A startled cry was cut short by Chepé Buga's hand over her lips.

"The old Atagon is at his prayers, Chinsi, of the golden hair," the Tatar whispered. "You would not like to disturb him. Nay, I have taken the song-bird in her nest."

The girl twisted and turned in a vain struggle. The Tatar's powerful arms held her easily. He pressed his face against the sweet tangle of her hair.

Chinsi's heart was beating heavily. She remembered Chepé Buga's admiring glances, and the persistency with which the khan had followed her about the castle. She realized that it was hopeless to try to free herself from his hold.

A sudden thought came to her, and she ceased her struggles. Chepé Buga cautiously lifted his hand from her mouth. Seeing that she was silent he laughed.

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"I am weary of waiting to slay your lover Gurd," he said. "You are the fairest woman of the Khantai Khan Mountains—nay, of Tartary."

His hand passed over her hair eagerly, but he did not give up his grasp of her shoulders. The blood rushed to the girl's face under his touch. Although she was passive, her mind worked quickly.

"You are fair as the pine flowers in Summer, Chinsi," his voice was deep with passion. "You have quickened my blood with love."

His hand grasped her chin. But this time the girl tore herself free.

"Look, Tatar," she cried, "there are wolves around the castle. I have seen them from the window."

Chepé Buga laughed softly.

"You are as full of words as the magpie of Lhon Otai, Chinsi. And as wayward as an unbroken horse. Nay——"

"Fool!" stormed the girl. "Am I so witless as to try to deceive you? While you are prating of love, the castle may be in danger. I saw a man run from Changa to the shore. Who it was, I know not. Look, and you can see for yourself."

Doubtfully, Chepé Buga dragged her to the arrow slit. He looked long and keenly at the shore and the dark figures outlined in the snow.

"Ha! Little Chinsi," he whispered, "these may be wolves, but they have two legs and those two legs are wrapped around the barrels of horses."

He released the girl, without taking his eyes from the scene outside. What he saw roused his warrior's instincts. The dark forms under the pines were in motion now and moving toward the castle. Already they were out on the lake.

"They do not bear themselves like true men," meditated Chepé Buga aloud. "Unless my eyes deceive me yon strangers mean evil."

A cold breath of air touched the girl's shoulders where the parka had been loosened by her struggles. She recalled that the wind was blowing strangely through the castle. On a sudden impulse she turned toward the door of her chamber.

"The wind!" she cried in quick alarm. "The outer door must be open."

Without waiting for Chepé Buga's response she darted from the room into the hall. A glance into the entrance chamber showed her that the door to the lake was open. A pale square of snow showed without.

Chinsi knew that the dark figures she had seen on the lake could not be Gurd or his allies. The sight of the open door, which she had seen closed and barred earlier in the day by Chagan, filled her with sudden terror.

She sprang to the wall and swung the heavy mass of stone back on its massive iron supports. Tugging with all her strength at the lever, she moved it slowly into place. Chepé Buga was beside her, fumbling in the dark for the iron bars.

As Chinsi drew the lever up to its full length, the Tatar dropped the bars into place. As the iron fell into its sockets with a clang a heavy blow resounded on the door. They heard a muffled clamor on the surface of the lake.

Chepé Buga sprang to the arrow slit. He stepped back immediately and Chinsi heard the clang of a steel weapon against the stone of the opening. A light appeared in the chamber behind them. Chagan stood in the room, bearing a torch in one hand and his sword in the other.

"We are attacked, Chagan," shouted the khan, above the tumult. "Come into the hall. The light betrays us here!"

In the hall they found Khlit. In a few words Chepé Buga told his leader what had happened.

"Are you sure it is not Berang with his men?" demanded Khlit, his keen eyes searching the three before him. "Who opened the door?"

"Nay, Khlit, lord," said Chepé Buga grimly, "would Berang give me a love pat with a spear point through the embrasure? We found the door open. Had Chinsi not been as quick as a fox to close it, we should have been taken like sheep in pasture."

"Father," spoke Chinsi, "I saw a man not long since run from the gate to the shore——"

"Where is Lhon Otai?" questioned Khlit.

"Asleep among the jewels of the treasure-chamber, without doubt," grunted the khan. "Nay I wonder if that fellow Gurd has not been at work here."

"If he had come I would have known it," cried the girl angrily. "It was not Gurd."

"Then it must have been Satan himself or the long-bearded priest. Come, Khlit, lord, we will search the castle. Yon thick

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stones will keep out our visitors, I fancy. I suspect they knew something of Changa castle, for they came straight to the door, as a dog to his kennel."

"Lhon Otai is not in the treasure-chamber, lords," growled Chagan, who had left the group to investigate.

"I will go to his room," Chepé Buga ran to the stairs. "Do you waken the old priest, Khlit, if he is still here."

A moment served to show Khlit that Atagon was praying in his sleeping-chamber, ignorant or careless of what had happened. Chepé Buga, however, returned with more important news.

"The *shaman* is gone from his lair," he informed them grimly. "There is not so much as a smell of him in the castle. That is not all. Under his pallet where I thought the fat master of mysteries might have betaken himself in fright I found the remains of Chinsi's fire device. The instruments were broken, and the powder, by the traces, cast from the window. My nose tells me the *shaman* has been working us ill."

"Ill!" Khlit's brows knit in thought. "Then it was Lhon Otai that Chinsi saw. But then he must be with the men without, whether prisoner or not. Did he know of their coming?"

"Aye, lord," said Chagan suddenly, "I saw him listening at the embrasures."

"Yet he has not taken one of the jewels," put in Chepé Buga. "Hey, it is not like the fat toad to leave them untouched. He must think to gain them another way. I marked his eyes gleam upon them——"

"Pardon, sirs," Chinsi's musical voice broke in on them. The girl's eyes were bright and her breath came quickly. "On the tower, Father Khlit, I tried to tell you what I knew, but Chepé Buga came. Gurd warned me of what he heard during the hunt to the north. When he had Lhon Otai prisoner the *shaman* whispered to him that he should open the gate of Changa castle to the conjurers, not knowing that Gurd was a Christian. Nay more—before that, Gurd overheard Lhon Otai talking to his men by the fire at night where he thought he was safe from listeners in the woods. The *shaman* plans to leave the Kha Khan and Chepé Buga with the treasure of Changa Nor. But only so that he can take the two khans, who are his enemies, at the same time he seizes the treasure."

The Tatars exchanged glances. Chagan scowled blankly; but understanding dawned on Chepé Buga.

"By its coiling track a serpent is known," he said softly. "Lhon Otai saw to it that my horsemen who came here with me were sent to Baikal. And that the horde under Berang was dispersed. He has left us here with the gate open, like trussed fowls."

Khlit held out his bound hands in grim silence. In the excitement of the talk the others had not thought to cut loose the cords.

"Aye," he growled, "trussed. An evil day when the Jun-gar exchanged leaders. Being disowned I have not spoken what was in my mind. Nay, it was Lhon Otai who bound you also in his toils. He it was who destroyed the fire device that might guard Changa. And left open the gate tonight. Harken!"

Muffled blows resounded on the stones of the door. Chepé Buga flushed. Whipping out his sword he deftly severed the cords around Khlit's wrists.

"Such was not my doing, Khlit, lord," he muttered. "I have sworn an oath to guard you with my sword from danger. So be it. By the winged steed of Kaidu, it warms my blood that we are to fight together! We are your men, O Kha Khan, Chagan and I."

"Aye," roared the swordbearer, "I scent a battle."

Khlit's somber eyes lighted as he studied his comrades. Their scarred countenances were cast in shamed appeal.

"Say that we are one again, Khlit, lord," begged Chepé Buga.

A reckless smile twitched the Cossack's gray mustache. He placed his hands on the sword-hilts of the Tatars.

"We are three men, O brothers in arms, but our enemies will find we are one."

"That is a good word, lord," growled Chagan triumphantly.

Chepé Buga's eyes were eloquent of satisfaction. He cleared his throat gruffly. Lacking words, he caught Khlit's hand in a binding clasp.

"Nay," cried Chinsi, "Lhon Otai and the men with him will suffer, because they have lifted their hands against the altar of God, in Changa Nor."

The assurance of her speech made the warriors smile. They were men of direct thought and took little stock in the legend.

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As the three Tatars glanced at each other, each knew that one idea was in the minds of his companions.

It was Khlit who voiced this thought when the three stood on the tower of the castle at sunrise. The light showed them that the shores of the lake were filled with horsemen. Tents darkened the snow of the pine forests. Even beyond the forests, on the summits of the hills, the Tatars could see herds, and the *wagon-yurts* of a horde. Oxen and horses were tethered thickly throughout the encampment.

It was an army of hundreds, with their herds. And it made the circuit of Changa Lake.

"Lhon Otai," said Khlit, when he had surveyed the scene, "has brought the Kallmarks to Changa. Aye, his messenger, whom he sent to the south has brought them. And with the treasure, he has trapped the khans of the Jun-gar."

XIV

THAT same sunrise showed the inhabitants of the Khantai Khan Mountains to the west a strange sight.

By the headwaters of the Tunguska River, far from Changa Nor the men of Khantai Khan saw a herd of reindeer passing through the forest at a swinging trot. The beasts were lean with hunger, yet they did not stop to browse on patches of moss or on birch tips.

In the middle of the herd, mounted on a buck was the figure of a man. He was a tall man, wrapped in furs, with a dark face. As he rode he looked neither to right nor left. But the reindeer sniffed the wind as they paced along. Their muzzles were flecked with foam. Their eyes were starting from their sockets.

And the men of Khantai Khan wondered. For they knew it was fear that drove the reindeer past them without stopping.

XV

THE morning brought a parley from the Kallmarks around Changa Nor. Several of their khans rode up to the castle with Lhon Otai. They offered to spare the lives of those in Changa Nor, if the castle and the treasure were given up.

Khlit's answer was brief.

"How can we trust one who has already betrayed us?"

To Chepé Buga and Chagan Khlit proposed that they take advantage of the Kallmarks' offer to gain safety. He would remain with Atagon to defend the Christian altar. Both Tatars replied with one voice that they would not leave him.

"Let the dogs come," growled Chagan, balancing his two-handed weapon, "they hunt in a large pack, but the killing will be easier for us. They will have a taste of our swords. Would that Berang knew of this!"

"Lhon Otai has taken good care that he does not," retorted Chepé Buga.

Khlit occupied the morning in making a survey of the defenses of the castle. What they saw encouraged them. Changa castle had been built long before the days of cannon, and its stone walls were two yards in thickness. Save for the concealed door there was no entrance in the walls.

There was no opening in the roof of the castle proper. In the round tower, at one corner of the structure, a small postern gave access to the roof. By gaining the roof, therefore, the Kallmarks would have no means of winning their way into the castle until they had forced the tower door.

The summit of the tower was too high to be reached by ladders, and it commanded the roof of the castle proper. Arrow embrasures in the tower would permit the defenders to make things warm for any of their foes who climbed to the roof. The stone door to the lake was stout.

Under Khlit's direction the Tatars, assisted by Chinsi, brought chests, heavy furniture and logs of firewood to the entrance chamber. These they arranged to form a barricade in a half-circle around the door. This done, they ransacked the place for arms.

The girl brought them many weapons which had belonged to old defenders of the castle. Sturdy bows, with sheaves of arrows, stiff but powerful; several long spears, rusted with age, one of which Chagan promptly appropriated. Khlit ordered the other spears left at the barricade behind the lake door. The arrows they carried to the tower summit.

Chagan disappeared and presently returned, grinning, clad in a suit of linked Turkish mail that had belonged to the old Gutchluk. Chinsi brought Khlit a similar

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coat of mail left in the castle by Gurd. These were welcome, for the khans had arrived at Changa in hunting costume, unarmed save for their swords.

Their preparations were nearly complete when they were startled by a footstep behind them. They saw the figure of a man in complete armor, hauberk, breastplate and greaves, engraved with costly gold. It was Atagon, his white beard hanging down over his mailed chest, and a light, triangular shield on which a cross was inscrolled, on his left arm. In his right he bore a long bow.

The sudden appearance of the patriarch in his costume of a century ago startled the khans. Chagan gaped as if he had seen a spirit, while Khlit crossed himself with an oath.

"I heard what has passed, my children," said the patriarch's calm voice, "and my prayers are ended. It is our custom when a battle is on, for the presbyter to be with his knights. Our arms shall be strengthened by God."

"Ha!" laughed Chepé Buga. "There is a priest to my liking. Harken, old man, if you see the fat Lhon Otai in the throng, speed an arrow into his gizzard for me. If the curse of Changa Nor on its spoilers rings true, the arrow will go straight."

A sudden tumult on the ice outside drew the defenders to the tower top. They found that the expected attack was under way. Khlit had taken all his small force with him, leaving Chinsi to watch the door and warn them if it showed signs of giving way.

A single glance showed the experienced warriors, veterans of fifty battles, the plan of their enemy. The tower was too high, and too far removed from the hills at the shore of the lake for effective arrow fire from that quarter. The dark-faced warriors of the Kallmarks tried a few shafts that rattled harmlessly against the stones, and gave it up.

While a few score men advanced on foot against the lake door, bearing the stripped trunk of a giant pine, a hundred others circled the castle on horseback, discharging arrows at the tower top.

This fire, however, was handicapped by the slippery footing of the snow-covered ice which caused the horses to flounder, and by the height of the tower. A few pistol shots, directed against the tower, went wide of the mark. Protected by the battlements, the defenders made good play with arrows. Atagon proved himself a master of the long bow, while Chepé Buga and Chagan shot more rapidly, although scarce less surely, with their short Tatar weapons.

Especially when the ranks of Kallmarks around the pine trunk reached the door the defenders did murderous execution. The tower was nearly over the door, and the arrows, speeding from a height went through furs, leather and armor with ease. The space around the door was soon black with bodies.

As fast as men fell, however, others took their places. Spurred on by trumpets on the shore, and by the multitude of watching Kallmarks, the attackers wielded the heavy trunk against the stones.

"Look, lord!" cried Chagan. "Here come more of the dogs."

Kallmark warriors were appearing over the side of the castle furthest from the tower. Unseen and unmolested by the defenders, they had placed tree trunks against the walls, and now they easily gained the roof of the castle.

Khlit and Chagan at once turned their bows on the newcomers, who were a bare twenty feet below them. The Kallmarks threw themselves vainly against the tower postern, while the arrows made play among them.

"They will soon find their new nest well feathered," chuckled Khlit, as he struck down a brown-coated spearman.

The Kallmarks, finding that there was no direct entrance from the roof into the castle, beat a retreat to their ladders, leaving a score of dead and wounded on the summit of Changa.

Khlit turned to find Chagan busily wielding one of the heavy spears against the battlements of the tower. Using the massive iron point as a crowbar, the swordbearer was prying loose one of the stone blocks. Khlit lent his aid to the task, and in a moment Chagan had freed the stone enough to lift it from its resting place.

Exerting all his strength, the giant swordbearer raised the heavy block over his head. A warning cry went up from below, but the stone hurtled down, crushing three of the men about the pine trunk to the ice.

With a cry of triumph Chagan looked around for another missile. His ambition was heightened by his success, and this

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time he sprang to the battlement where a solid block of granite, three yards square formed a base for some ancient engine of war. Probably in past generations a ballista had cast its stone from the foundation of the granite. The spear was helpless to budge this weight, but Chagan disappeared down the tower stairs, presently returning with a heavy log of firewood, twice his own height, and one of the andirons from the hall grate.

Working furiously, he wedged the haft of the andiron under the nearer side of the granite block, which was about a foot in thickness. Little by little he raised the massive block sufficiently to insert the end of the log under it. The granite flag stood on masonry which elevated it almost to the height of the battlement.

Putting his shoulder under the log, Chagan dropped to his knees. Rising slowly, the powerful sword-bearer lifted the lever with him, his muscles bulging and quivering under the strain. Another second, and, with a grunt, he pushed granite and log over the battlement.

The Kallmarks sprang back as it flew down on them. But the stone achieved a result as unexpected to Chagan as it was to the attackers. As it crashed upon the ice there was an ominous crackle.

A series of sharp cracks followed and the men on the tower saw a section of the ice before the door give way, and vanish into dark water. Other sections caved in, once the surface of the lake had been broken, and the Kallmarks about the door, with their pine trunk, were soon floundering in icy water. Those in mail were pulled under by the weight of their clothing.

Others on the outskirts of the breaking ice scrambled to safety, numbed and stunned by their plunge. The horsemen drew back on all sides, giving the castle a clear berth, for the break in the ice had weakened the whole surface.

Chagan's stones had proved too much for the ice coating, already severely tried by the crowd of men bearing the heavy pine trunk. The sword-bearer eyed the destruction he had wrought with a surprised eye.

"Now by Meik and the winged steed of Kaidu!" he swore. "That was a mighty blow. No less than fifty are dead, at one stroke. Would that Berang and our comrades could have seen it."

The brown-coated horsemen now drew beyond bow-shot of Changa. The first attack on Changa had failed. But Khlit's face was grave. A careful inspection of the lake door had shown him that the hinges had fallen and the iron bars had been nearly wrenched from their sockets. A few more blows from the pine trunk and it must have fallen in. And their stock of arrows had been diminished by half.

XVI

THROUGHOUT the night Chinsi took her turn at watching and sleeping by the fire in the hall with the warriors. Chagan was in high spirits, because of the breaking of the ice. But Chepé Buga and Khlit were silent. Atagon was as calm as ever.

"You fought with the might of a Christian hero," said the patriarch to Chepé Buga, "and God is watching over his shrine, from the clouds of heaven."

"Nay, Priest," muttered the handsome khan scornfully, "say rather that you fought like a paladin of Tatary. I saw two arrows strike that helmet of yours but you heeded them not."

"The helmet has been worn by Christian knights," responded the patriarch. "Except for Chagan's wound where an arrow has slit his cheek, we are still whole. But before long the evil minds of the pagans will think to carry their ladders to the roof, where they can lay them against the tower."

"By Satan's cloven hoof," swore Chepé Buga, "a shrewd thought, that!"

Khlit glanced at Atagon curiously. The words as well as the attire of the old man were those of many years ago. Atagon seemed to be without fear. The Cossack felt that this was because Atagon believed in the legend of Changa Nor. But how could the castle be held? So far they had done so, yet they could not hope to much longer, against the numbers of their foe.

If they still cherished hope that the Jun-gar horde of Berang would learn of their danger and bring aid from Baikal, they soon saw their error. And they had new proof of the cunning of Lhon Otai. The next morning the Kallmarks came for a new parley. Khlit took their message from the tower and when he came to the hall his face was serious.

"Lhon Otai has tricked us again," he

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said grimly. "He sent one of his *shamans* to Lake Baikal with a message to Berang to hurry here alone. Not suspecting, the khan has done so. He is bound hand and foot, in the camp of the Kallmarks. They showed me his sword, as proof."

A gloomy silence greeted this. With the young Berang a prisoner their last hope of aid from the Jun-gar horde had vanished. A sally from the castle under cover of night was not to be thought of. Even if the Kallmark horde had not surrounded the lake, the snow outlined the castle too clearly for them to hope to escape the keen eyes of the watchers.

Late that afternoon Atagon who had been watching in the tower came down to the hall.

"The pagans are in motion on the shore," he said.

Khlit and his followers made their way to the tower. They saw that several of the *wagon-yurts* of the encampment were being drawn down to the shore of the lake by oxen. In puzzled silence they watched while the wheeled tents were dragged out on the ice. The *yurts* came half-way to the castle, within easy bow-shot, and then halted.

Kallmark horsemen drove the oxen back, leaving the heavy wagons on the ice. No signs of life were to be observed about the *yurts*. The mystery was solved in a moment, however. A flight of arrows sped from openings in the heavy tents toward the tower. The defenders ducked hastily as the missiles whistled past them.

Atagon drew his long bow and sent a shaft whizzing at the tents. It stuck fast in the covering. The Kallmarks had cleverly placed strong hides over the felt of the tents. The loose hides formed an effectual protection against anything short of a pistol shot. Through openings in the covering the Kallmark archers could shoot at the tower with safety.

In this way they overcame the handicap of the slippery ice, and the uneven balance of their horses' backs.

Realizing that it was useless to return the fire of the *yurts*, Khlit bade his companions lie under the shelter of the battlements, while Chinsi brought them fur robes as protection against the growing cold of evening. Atagon, who was shielded by his helmet, kept watch over the ramparts for signs of a renewal of the attack.

It came in the period of twilight between sunset and the beginning of the Northern Lights.

They heard a confused murmur on the farther side of the castle. Watching cautiously from the tower they saw dark forms moving along the battlements of the roof below them. The Kallmarks had placed their ladders again against the further side and had gained the roof.

They could see their foemen advancing slowly among the dead bodies, bearing what seemed to be the trunk of a tree. The Kallmarks as well as Atagon had seen the advantage of storming the tower from the summit of the castle, and they relied on darkness to cover their movements, after their costly repulse of yesterday.

Khlit rose to his feet, bow in hand. Instantly his shoulder stung sharply under the mail and he dropped to his knees. The arrows of the Kallmarks in the *yurts* were still flying over the tower which they could see after a fashion outlined against the sky.

Atagon stood erect, plying his arrows heedless of the peril, but Khlit drew Chagan to his knees.

"Their arrows will harm us here," he whispered. "Go you down the stairs leading up the tower. Beside the postern door I marked an embrasure giving on the castle roof. Take your spear——"

The experienced sword-bearer needed no further advice. Taking up his heavy weapon he trundled down the stairs. Abreast the postern he peered from the embrasure. He was now on a level with the Kallmarks on the roof, and he could see their forms vaguely, as they raised the tree trunks they had fashioned into rough ladders against the tower.

Silently Chagan inserted the point of his spear in the opening and waited.

On the tower top Khlit heard the ladder scraping against the stone. Atagon had reeled back, struck by an arrow which clanged wickedly against his armor. The next moment the helmeted head of a Kallmark appeared cautiously over the battlements. Khlit and Chepé Buga rose to their feet gripping their swords. Then an angry shout rang out from below.

The men on the tower heard a groan. The head of the Kallmark disappeared. Looking over the side Khlit made out the dim bulk of the ladder falling sidewise. A

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cry of terror from the men clinging to it, and it crashed over the side of the castle, to the ice below.

"That was Chagan's spear," grunted Khlit, "the sword-bearer has toppled over their ladder."

The remaining invaders had left the roof. The arrows from the *yurts* had ceased. Quiet reigned once more around Changa, while the Northern Lights began their play in the sky. But Atagon lay unconscious where he had fallen on the tower.

Chepé Buga lifted the patriarch on his back and made his way past Chagan on the tower steps. He bore his burden to the hall where Chinsi was waiting anxiously by the fire.

"The old hero has stopped one arrow too many, Chinsi," he muttered. "Nay, he is not dead. Help me take off his armor."

The girl with the Tatar's assistance removed Atagon's helmet and body armor, and unstrapped the shield from his arm. The arrow had struck in a joint of the armor at the priest's throat. Chinsi withdrew it tenderly and bound the wound with a strip of her under-garment. There was little bleeding but the stern face of the patriarch was pale. He had been sorely hurt.

Chepé Buga warmed himself at the fire, watching Chinsi as she tended the priest.

XVII

"THE curse of Changa Nor upon its spoilers is slow in coming to pass, Chinsi of the golden hair," the khan observed. "I still live and Lhon Otai still is snug in his fat carcass. Your lover Gurd has disappeared, methinks."

The girl looked up from the priest. There was a line of weariness under her eyes, but the eyes were clear and fearless.

"Nay," she said, "Gurd will come. And we will be saved from our enemies."

"Satan himself could not get through the Kallmark camp. There is no man living who can aid us now."

"No man, perhaps, Chepé Buga," she said strangely, and was silent.

The khan's eyes dwelt lingeringly on her slender form. He was loath to think Chinsi would fall into the hands of the Kallmarks. Better that he should end the girl's life with his own sword. The next attack would be the end of them. He put scant trust in the legend of Changa Nor.

"Do you still hate me, little Chinsi?" questioned the khan. "My arrows have sped faster because of you. If we must die, say that you hate me not."

The girl returned his glance steadily.

"You are a bold man, Chepé Buga," she said slowly. "Nay, because you have carried Atagon from danger, I forgive you the evil you would have done me."

A sudden clamor over their heads startled both into silence. Chepé Buga leaped to his feet.

"They are attacking the tower," he cried. "Stay here, Chinsi, and I will come for you if things go ill. Aye——"

He broke off as the girl put her finger to her lips. Another sound came to their ears, a dull knocking. The pounding continued, nearly drowned by the tumult on the roof. Then came a loud crash. It was close to them, so close that it must be in one of the near-by rooms.

"The lake door!" cried Chepé Buga.

"Aye," Chinsi sprang to her feet in quick alarm, "the lake must have frozen over again during the night. The Kallmarks have beaten down the gate."

XVIII

"GO TO the tower, and you can see what has happened," Khlit directed. "Take Chagan with you, Chinsi, for some of the Kallmarks might think to take shelter in Changa castle. I will stay with Chepé Buga."

Khlit took his seat beside Atagon and the body of his comrade. The girl sought the tower, followed more slowly by the swordbearer.

As she climbed the steps she became conscious of a noise outside the castle. It was a distant tumult, unlike the clamor of the assault. As she gained the summit of the tower it grew to a roar that echoed between the walls of the tower and the hills.

The darkness was pierced by the Northern Lights. When Chinsi's eyes had become accustomed to the gloom she beheld a strange scene.

Across the surface of the lake horsemen were darting. In the camp itself on shore all was confusion. She heard the shrill neighing of horses, the bellowing of cattle in fear. The shouts of the Kallmarks resounded through the confusion. Fires had sprung up in a wide arc through the pine

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forest. She saw the dark bulk of the *yurts* hurrying along the shore of the lake.

Her first thought was that the forest was on fire. This could not be, however, in the snow. The fires were separate. And she could see men throwing branches on them. Above the tumult of the beasts and the crackling of fire she caught a hideous snarling and snapping. Then she saw for the first time that the woods beyond the camp were filled with masses of dark forms. In front of these masses riders were wheeling, swinging their swords. By the fires she saw animals trotting through the pines.

"Wolves!" she cried.

"Aye," assented Chagan, who had come up. "The great wolf pack of the North is yonder. It came on the Kallmarks when they were attacking the castle. They had no sentries out in the hills. The pack got among the herds before they knew it."

"The fires will keep the wolves away from the camp," cried Chinsi.

"Nay, they were built too late. The pack has tasted blood. The wolves are mingled in the herds now. The beasts are mad with fear. Harken!"

The shrill scream of a horse in pain came to the ears of the girl and she shuddered. She saw that the herds of cattle which had been placed in the hills beyond the camp were now mingled in the camp itself. In spite of the efforts of the horsemen, the animals were stampeding along the shore, rushing from one point to another. The fires excited them further. Even the oxen yoked to the *wagon-yurts* had caught the fever of fear. The contagion had spread to the horses, which were becoming unmanageable.

"If it were not for the animals, the plight of our friends yonder would not be so bad," continued Chagan who was watching events intently. "By lighting more fires, they might save themselves. But the herds are in the grip of fear. And the pack is among them, having tasted blood. Ha!"

He pointed to the further shore, where there were fewer fires. From this place groups of cattle and oxen were moving in the direction of the lake. Horsemen rode among them, powerless to check them because their mounts were beyond control. The tide of beasts swept down to the lake. By the lights in the sky Chinsi could see whips lifted, and the blades of swords flashing. Here and there a rider went down under the mass.

A group of Kallmarks had mustered at the edge of the lake and were endeavoring to turn the frantic animals to each side, along the shore. But the snarling of the wolves echoed in the rear of the herd and masses of the cattle ventured out on the frozen lake. A number of *yurts* drawn by oxen were in their midst. To the girl it seemed as if an invisible hand were driving the beasts to destruction. On the nearer side of the lake where the main body of Kallmarks was, the men were making headway in their fight against the wolves.

"They are out on the lake," she cried. "Oh——"

With a rending crackle whole surfaces of the ice gave way under the weight of the animals and the *yurts*. Horsemen, beasts and tents disappeared into the black water. The flickering glow of the sky showed her the horns of cattle swimming in the water. A frantic rumble sounded from the doomed beasts.

This catastrophe was fatal to the Kallmarks. The parts of the herd that had gone along the shore became panic-stricken and broke into a run. They merged with the horses, mad with the double fear of the wolves and the breaking ice. In a moment the whole mass was in motion in one direction. The leading beasts hesitated as they reached the fires and the men tending them, and then drove on, urged by the multitude behind.

Chinsi saw the men by the fires leap into passing *yurts* or on the backs of horses. By now the mass was flowing out into the woods, past the fires. On either side ran the wolf pack, pulling down beasts from the herd.

The Kallmarks were powerless to halt their animals. The horses went with the cattle, and the men went perforce with the horses, or crowded in the *yurts*.

But Chepé Buga was already in the next chamber, where the barricade had been erected around the door. He saw dark figures blocking the open gate. Spears were thrusting down the barrier. With a shout he leaped to the barricade, swinging his blade over his head. The sword struck against a body and a groan echoed through the chamber.

There was scant light, yet the khan guessed that few of the Kallmarks had squeezed through the door. Protected by

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the bulwark of logs he swung his sword into the dark in front of him. He heard men cry out, and felt an arrow whiz past him.

Chepé Buga was a skilled swordsman, and he had the advantage of position. He leaped back and forth behind the barrier, slashing at his enemies, who were penned in the space between the gate and the barricade.

Another moment and he felt that he had cleared the space of the invaders. But others were coming through the door. He stumbled over the spear which Khlit had laid on the floor in readiness. Seizing it he thrust at the opening. A groan rewarded his effort.

He heard Chinsi beside him, and called over his shoulder.

"Go for Chagan. There are many more without."

The girl sped away and Chepé Buga devoted himself anew to his spear work. For a space the door was cleared. Then Chepé Buga felt his spear caught and held. He released the shaft and took up his sword.

Stepping quietly to one side of the opening, he struck down the first man who entered. As he did so he felt a sharp pain in the side of his head. One of the wounded who lay below had struck him. Dazed by the blow, the khan shifted his position.

He lost precious time by this movement. Two men had entered and his sword crashed against their weapons. In the darkness none of the three could see to strike surely. Chepé Buga sought for an opening cautiously, wearied by his efforts and the loss of blood. He listened anxiously for the coming of Chagan.

The next instant he reeled back. A spear had entered his armor, at the side. As he thrust weakly at his foe he caught the flash of a sword beside him. A groan came from one of his foemen.

"Ha, Chagan!" he panted.

The last of the invaders fell before a thrust of the sword that gleamed beside him in the light from the fire behind them. The chamber was now empty of foemen, and the door was blocked with bodies. Quiet was restored.

Weakly Chepé Buga staggered out into the hall. His companion closed the door behind him. Then the khan sank down beside Atagon. For the first time he saw his companion by the firelight. Even to his dimmed eyes the figure did not seem like Chagan's bulk. The firelight gleamed on the small shield of Atagon which the other carried.

Above the shield was a white, anxious face and a tangle of gold hair.

"Chinsi!" he gasped. "How——"

"Chagan could not leave the tower," she said softly, "they are hard beset. I took Atagon's sword and shield, to help you if I could."

The girl laid down her shield and knelt beside him.

"They have gone from the door," she said eagerly, "I heard them."

Her glance fell on the dark stain that covered the khan's mail, and she gave a cry of dismay.

Chepé Buga shook his head in mute protest as she tried to draw off his heavy mail.

"The spear," he whispered, "went deep. Your sword killed the man that did it. Brave Chinsi, the golden-haired!"

Chepé Buga's dark head sank back on the floor, and his sword fell from his fingers. The watching girl saw a gray hue steal into his stern face. Chepé Buga, she knew, was dying.

"Harken," she whispered, pointing to Atagon who lay beside them, conscious. "Let the presbyter bless you, Chepé Buga. The priest will save your soul, for heaven."

The Tatar moved his head weakly until he could see Atagon. Something like a smile touched his drawn lips. The girl bent her head close to his to hear what he was trying to say.

"Nay, Chinsi. Do you bless me. Heaven is—where you are."

Raising one hand, Chepé Buga caught a strand of the girl's hair which lay across his face. The girl, who had stretched out her hand to Atagon, sighed regretfully. Yet she did not move her head away.

Chepé Buga's hand was still fast in her hair. But its weight hung upon the strand, and the Tatar's eyes were closed when Khlit and Chagan ran from the tower stairs into the hall a moment later.

The two halted beside the form of Chepé Buga. A single glance told Khlit that the khan was dead. He placed his hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Harken, Chinsi," he said, "what do you hear?"

The girl strained her ears, but she could hear nothing. The hall was silent save for

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the heavy breathing of the two warriors. Yet the silence was ominous after the storm of the assault.

"What is it?" asked the girl, her heart beating heavily.

"It is the curse of Changa Nor," said Khlit grimly. "It has fallen on the Kallmarks."

The girl rose to her feet with a startled cry.

"Aye," said Chagan, leaning wearily on his bloodied spear, "it must be the curse, for Chepé Buga is dead."

By dawn the main body of the Kallmarks had passed from the lake. Isolated groups of horsemen rode after them, escorted by wolves. The fires in the forest were dying down. About fallen beasts the wolves gathered, snarling. In the path of the riders lay overturned *yurts*, and dark forms invisible under a slavering press of wolves.

XIX

WHEN he had recovered from his wound Atagon, the aged presbyter of Changa Nor who was sometimes called by visiting Christians the last descendant of Prester John, prayed reverently before his shrine. In his prayers he gave heartfelt thanks to God for saving the altar of Changa Nor from the pagans. Surely, thought Atagon, it was the hand of God; for Lhon Otai, the *shaman* who desecrated the shrine, was found dead, mangled by the wolves; and since that night Kallmarks and Jun-gar aliked respected Changa castle.

True, Atagon did not know that it was the command of Khlit, called the Wolf, that the shrine be unmolested by the Tatars. For Khlit's position as Kha Khan was unquestioned after the death of Lhon Otai, and the retreat of the Kallmarks to the border, following upon the defeat of their plans and the slaughter at Changa Nor.

And hearing the prayers of Atagon, Gurd, the hunter, did not find it in his heart to tell the presbyter the truth of what had happened. Only to Chinsi, as is the way of lovers, did Gurd reveal that, knowing the treachery of Lhon Otai and the coming of the Kallmarks, he had taken a desperate chance to drive the besiegers from Changa Nor. He had led his reindeer herd across the course of the great wolf pack of the North, which was on its annual migration southward along the shore of Lake Baikal. Then he had fled for the Kallmark camp, with the pack at his heels, striking down his reindeer until all but one had fallen to the wolves.

And so Chinsi laughed softly to herself when she heard the khan Berang tell how, from the door of a *wagon-yurt*, he had seen a man clad in the furs of animals and mounted on a stag lead the wolves into the Kallmark herds that night.

For Berang's face bore the look of one who has seen a miracle as great as the dance of the *Rakchas* by the three Diandas, or even the flaming anvils of the *Cheooki* gods in the skies.

THE FACT OF IT

by **CHARLES C. JONES**

HE BUSTED into Pinto's place, his voice was big and rough—
So up-and-at-ye some one had to call his bully bluff.
He ordered up one lonely drink, and when he'd put 'er by,
He tangled with a little runt who had a steely eye.
Then, sad to say, in just no time the place was red with gore—
That bad-man licked that little guy, and half a dozen more.
Which only proves you can not tell—as some don't know at all—
How much of any bully's bull, by hearin' of him bawl!

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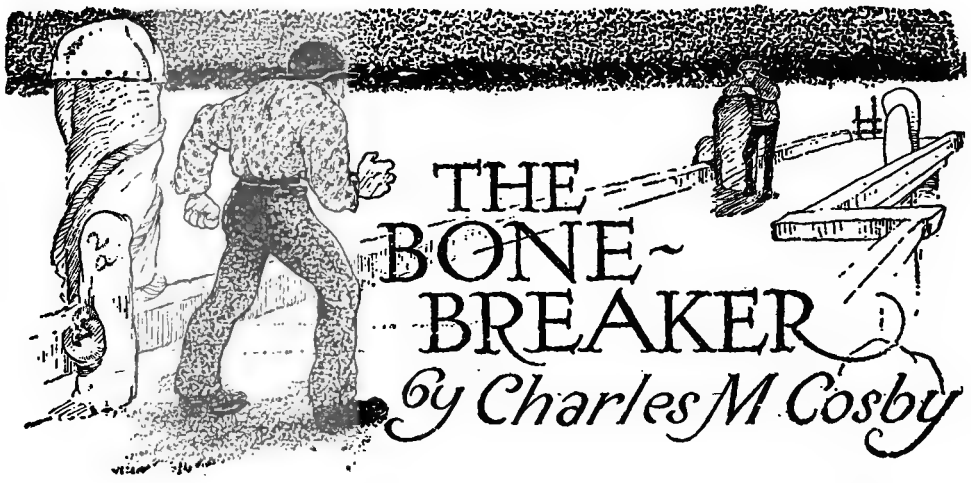

THE BONE-BREAKER

by Charles M Cosby

THOUGH aging now and modified with each retelling, the story still is told in San Francisco of how the "Bone-breaker" proved an adage and thereby developed understanding.

"Bone-breaker" Jackson, who was christened Francis X. in the fulness of mother hope and pride, before he grew up to plague the police of San Francisco by multiplying trouble on that city's rather troubled water-front, has returned long since to the ways of industry and abstinence, ways that lead back to church and a mother's heart; but any one who wishes to test this calmer temper to the old-time destroying point need only assure the Bone-breaker that appearances are never deceitful. He knows better.

On the day of his enlightenment the Bone-breaker brooded at a dingy table over an empty glass in a dingy half-cellar of a room, the sawdust-covered floor of which, splashed with spilled liquors and tobacco-juice, was exactly four steps below street level. Along one side of this room at right angles to the street ran a bar dingier than room or table and bearing many marks of battle. Behind the bar two men watched the brooder furtively and with ill-concealed anxiety; one a massive creature of truculent appearance, the bartender and bouncer, who, like his bar, bore marks of battle.

The Bone-breaker brooded in solitary state, his table one of a cluster in the twilit alcove beyond the open space before the bar. He usually did his brooding alone. None cared, not even the bullies of the Barbary Coast, to dare the violent moods and volcanic tempers of this human tank.

The word "tank" is used in the double sense, advisedly. Full of the "shock" booze sold in certain rum-holes on the water-front, Jackson was as impervious as the tank to punishment and well nigh as destructive.

In matters of this kind the Coast is quick to learn. Toward the last, therefore, it was the ignorant who suffered, even the wilder and more reckless in that community of wild and reckless spirits giving the Bone-breaker all the room he needed or demanded when the devils of foiled ambition were prompting him to demonstrate what he had failed, because of fouling rules, to demonstrate in three profitless but lively preliminary bouts—that he was the best two-handed, four-footed, fanged and fingered fighter in the known world.

It was this primitive instinct to use all Nature's weapons when buffeted by an adversary that had interrupted the Bone-breaker's pursuit of his pet ambition and had filled him with an ingrowing grouch. He saw in his enforced elimination, not just punishment for savage rages and their primordial impulse to mauling, pawing murder, but an organized plot on the part of boxing authorities to keep him from his goal—the world's championship. He was obsessed of the idea, and it was this obsession that sent him to the bottle, its black moods and volcanic upheavals.

There was more than the usual brain behind the Bone-breaker's obsession. He had shown himself a good man—a marvelous man in the sheer brute will to fight, and in his ability to fight well, too, when pitted against the second-raters of the preliminary.

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At this moment, as on previous occasions, he was filled with a lusting fury to demonstrate his fitness to all the world, referees included and notwithstanding.

As a matter of fact five huskies, pooling interests in the days before the Bone-breaker was known as such, had presumed to argue with him. With the aid of a chair and a table, the Bone-breaker had sent four of the five to hospital for varying spells and the fifth off a pier-head in full flight. Two of the five barely lived to repent.

Small wonder that Jackson felt supreme confidence in his ability to overwhelm all comers. The urge was on him tonight and, as always, he responded with alacrity and violence.

With an exclamation, half growl, half roar, the Bone-breaker surged to his feet, sending table, glassware and chairs scattering in all directions. The bouncer-bartender promptly ducked out of sight. His companion, smaller and less offensive to the eye, but notoriously the more dangerous of the two, slid one hand under the bar and waited, very still, eyes dead, face utterly expressionless. The Bone-breaker, heeding neither, lunged for the swinging doors, hurled them aside and surged into the street.

It was Midwinter, the dinner hour, and the occasional street lamps of this particular byway had been lighted for some time. As the Bone-breaker appeared in the dimly-lighted street there was a sudden stir among the few loiterers thereabouts. The narrow thoroughfare in his vicinity emptied as though by magic. Perceiving the Bone-breaker on the rampage, loiterers fled to cover like rats at sight of a dog. Grunting his disgust, the Bone-breaker turned to the right at random and started toward the river.

All else failing he could always pick trouble with the cops. It was discouraging work, in view of the fact that they, when quelling the Bone-breaker, invariably fought in squads and with clashing night sticks, but it was better than no fight at all and, of late, the Bone-breaker had despaired of demonstrating his ability on the strong man who would fight singly and with Nature's tools.

As he bitterly pondered this fresh injustice his angry eyes glimpsed a shape dimly limned against the water, the figure of a man who leaned on a mooring-post. The Bone-breaker muttered a joyful imprecation and hurried forward with swift, sure strides.

MEANWHILE, visibly shaken, the bartender-bouncer had emerged from retirement behind the bar. The proprietor, lip curling slightly, spoke and looked his contempt.

"If I was built on your lines, you big stiff, I'd make morgue-meat of that blankety blank blank," he said. He caressed the revolver his hand had touched beneath the bar. "I'll do it, anyhow, if he ever starts a rough-house in here again; I'm tired of it."

The bartender shook his head in disagreement. He was ashamed but frankly and solemnly honest.

"I wouldn't draw a gun on that bird for a gold mine salted with diamonds," he said. "I'll never forget the time the 'Wop' pulled a knife on him; and used it, too. He might as well have been prodding a redwood. It 'ud a been a —— sight better for his constitootion. The Bone-breaker just throws him on his face, grinds it into the floor with one hand, twists the Wop's arm behind him with the other and nat'rally ties knots in it.

"I never hope to hear a man scream so again. And I'll never forget the back flip of the hand I got when I tried to prevent the massacre with a bung-starter. I got a dint in my skull yet—" fingering the back of his head—"where it hit the bar-rail. No, sir! Take it from me, if you want to start somethin' in reason go out and shoot that at a grizzly bear, but for Gawd's sake don't point it at Jackson; not while I'm here."

THE man that leaned on the mooring-post was a stranger to these things, apparently. He scarcely shifted his position as the Bone-breaker, looking less than his six feet because of the mighty frame and muscles that swelled lateral measurements out of proportion, bore down on him, moving with a coordinated litheness that suggested brute strength less than ability to use it. The Bone-breaker had both in abundance.

As the Bone-breaker's hurrying feet trampled the boards of the pier flooring he roared joy and warning. It would be impossible now, save only by swimming, for his elected enemy to escape him. As for

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the stranger, he received this sudden challenging apparition without a sign of perturbation and scarcely a show of interest.

Turning his head slowly, he gave the Bone-breaker a casual glance. The Bone-breaker, having an eye only for the most obvious of externals, failed to note the nonchalance of the stranger's glance in the sharp disheartening conclusion that he had been cheated. The head that the stranger turned was dwarfed by the shoulders that bore it, and they in turn seemed to rest uncertainly on long, awkward legs. Surely this was no fighting man. The figure, huddled on the post and wadded into a new coat that was too short and an old sweater that was too long, was almost grotesque. The Bone-breaker was filled with rage.

"Well, he would have to fight anyway, the blankety blank blank!"

And the Bone-breaker moved forward to insure belligerency, his purpose all too plain.

Yet there was nothing in the stranger's bearing to indicate he sensed his danger or cared particularly about avoiding it. On the contrary, the man who was moving to annihilate him he regarded with blue eyes of boyish innocence and a sort of guileless wonder. He had neither turned to receive nor avoid attack but was staring over one of those incongruous shoulders. He turned now; a sort of slow, ungainly shuffle, in perfect keeping with the ungainly build. There was, however, no menace in the movement and the Bone-breaker paused at sight of the trustful stare in the boyish eyes. The stranger was speaking.

"I never met you," he was saying mildly. "I got no time to lick every dockwolloper who thinks he can fight. You better start away from here; or, if this is your pier, I'll start."

"Will you fight?" the Bone-breaker was saying as the other finished. "Will you fight like a man, you long-legged, red-headed —— —— ——. Will you fight like a man, or have I gotta make you fight?"

The stranger eyed him, imperturbable, so far as eye could see. But the eying was momentary. Almost in the instant of his profane and angry question the Bone-breaker hurled himself across the intervening space in a mighty charge calculated to sweep even a strong man into oblivion. Both the Bone-breaker and the stranger were in for a surprise. The stranger was not swept into oblivion, but he avoided an amazing shower of blows with difficulty and marveled with growing anger at their crushing force.

"Lookit!" shrilled a youngster across the street. "A guy's givin' the Bone-breaker an argyment."

The cry, bringing men, boys and even a few women, ran up and down the street and along the water-front as the preliminary skirmish became a battle. All were keen to see what they had been so eager to avoid. It was a thing well worth seeing—a man willing to stand against the Bone-breaker.

A man able to stand against him, to withstand the first shattering rush of that savage fighter was enough to bring flocking to the scene every person in this queer section of glitter and squalor and hair-trigger violence. The crowd surged with the fighters, but at a respectful distance, constantly fed from the tangle of streets and cluttering dives.

For a moment the stranger gave ground. Then the Bone-breaker recoiled without willing it and sat down heavily, knocked off his feet for the first time since boyhood. Bewilderment, amazement, chagrin were followed swiftly by wild raging anger. The Bone-breaker arose as though on springs and, rising, fell upon the stranger so suddenly that the latter was caught off guard. He had overestimated the effect of that short-arm jab, driven home with all the weight of shoulder and body behind it. The man's head was iron.

The stranger reeled under the Bone-breaker's second vicious onslaught and covered awkwardly, but with a thoroughness that caused the crowd to forget ungainliness of figure and shuffling postures, the Bone-breaker to see red. He pressed the attack like a wild thing, and the force and fury of it gave the stranger little time to cover or fight back. It seemed to the tensely expectant crowd that the two would go over the pier-end, still fighting.

Then the second miracle happened. A crouch too swift accurately to impress the eye, a shuffle that revealed awkwardness as the zig-zagging lightning does, and the positions of stranger and Bone-breaker were reversed. The Bone-breaker lay near the pier-end; or rather, knelt on hands and knees, gasping, convulsed. The stranger, slipping under his guard, had landed on the body. The crowd gasped, as though it, too, had received a blow. The Bone-breaker seemed outclassed.

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Not for long, however. A moment later he had lurched to his feet, filled with the will to kill. Developments thereafter were as bewilderingly swift as they were sensationally astounding. Bone-breaker Jackson fought with the fury and the vicious disregard of rules that had made him a terror to the Coast, but this amazing stranger would not be terrified. True, he gave ground at times, but this was equally true of the human tank whose previous experience had been confined exclusively to taking ground, not giving it.

For five more minutes the men stamped up and down the pier, swinging in swift circles, swapping blows any one of which would have killed an ordinary man, blocking, side-stepping, ducking, while three policemen across the way decided not to interfere on the earnest presentation of a fourth.

For five minutes it seemed the stranger must go down in one of the cyclonic rushes of the Bone-breaker; yet for five minutes he weathered them, though both men rocked and staggered under smashing blows. The incredible speed and fury of the Bone-breaker's style of fighting was at the same time a menace to his opponent and a protection to himself.

Just what had saved the stranger so far, the marveling spectators had been unable to determine. He, however, had won a large measure of their admiration and respect by his marvelous performance in standing up against the Bone-breaker. As the outcome hung in the balance, the Bone-breaker suddenly lashed out with a leg and foot in a murderous effort to finish his adversary by kicking him.

Cries of "shame" were lost in a woman's hysterical:

"My Gawd! He's got him!"

She referred not to the kick, which had been avoided partly, but to the fact that the Bone-breaker had laid hands on the stranger as they reeled into contact and was dragging him into a deadly embrace well known on the Barbary Coast as making up in main strength for any lack of skill. For a moment the stranger's flare of mounting anger at that unsuccessful attempt to cripple, perhaps murder, him blended with wonder at the monstrous strength of those gripping hands. And then the marvelous was capped again by the miraculous, the amazing, the incredible.

The two arms of the stranger doubled as though to push his antagonist away, and those who had seen that tried before jumped to the conclusion the fight was over. But the manner of the thrust that followed was something they had never seen before. The two great freckled fists of the stranger traveled less than six inches from start to finish, but they jumped with the crushing force of a thunderbolt, a grunt and a heave behind them. Full to the point of the jaw those great mauls drove home and the Bone-breaker, mastered at last, fell as though shot through the head.

WHEN the Bone-breaker opened his eyes again his mouth opened, too, and he cursed from a full heart four policemen who were bending over him. The Bone-breaker obviously was laboring under the impression that a police club had felled him from behind. Reassured on this point, he demanded:

"Wha'd he hit me with? The long-legged red-headed blankety blank blank!"

"A club—the one he wears at the end of his arm," explained the cop who had counseled non-interference, and there was a touch of malice in the explanation.

A murmur from the crowd confirmed the miracle as recollection of the stranger's fighting quality filtered through the Bone-breaker's flustered brain. The Bone-breaker staggered to his feet, a chastened light in the one eye still visible in the wreckage of his countenance.

"My old mother was right," he said, and crossed himself. "'Twas no man but the devil himself who did it. 'Tis a warning; I'll fight no more."

"A devil with his dukes—yes," snickered the cop who had voted against intervention; "I saw him in action a week ago last night."

"Who is it?" the Bone-breaker demanded suspiciously.

"An Australian—Robert Fitzsimmons," the cop explained; "and, believe me, he's some comer!"

"Comer!" snorted the Bone-breaker; "he's the best man in the world, devil or Australian. I'll fight no more. My old mother was right. But," he added, and every word was a mirth-killing menace, "I'll trample any three men on the pier who misdoubt me. He's a deceivin' fighter, this devil of an Australian."

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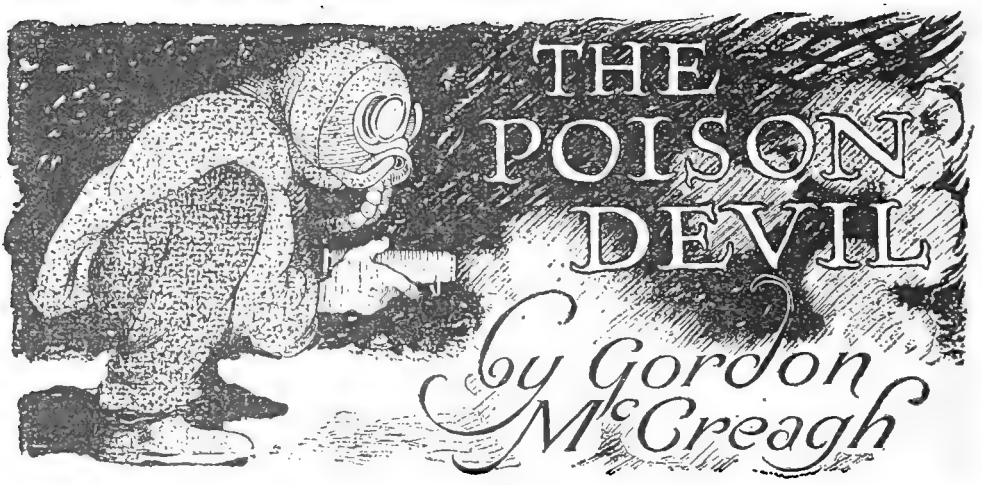

Author of "The Honor of the Escadrille," "The White Man of Borneo," etc.

IF YOU were to stab with a pencil-point at what looked to be the very center of the map of Borneo you would strike a point where the Kapuas Mountains and the Bowui Range and the dead volcanoes of the Muller Group all come together in a tangle of low valleys and criss-cross ravines. Here meet also the two extremes of the rainy season. When the southeast monsoon has passed with its sixty inches of rain, comes along the northwest monsoon bringing a hundred and ten.

It is obvious, then, that the place is boiler-hot—like the inside—and sweltering and malarious and silent with the green, crawling silence of vast trees which shut out the sky and giant ferns below which shut out the light, and husky creeping things lowest of all which reach out swift tendrils to twine 'round one's leg while one stands and watches the ooze bubble up 'round one's boat.

The Dutch officials call this very evil place the *dessa*, or sub-district of Koetei and stay away from it. But all the rest of Borneo knows it as the Mahakkam River *negri* and is content to hear about it from a distance. No animals live there, and very few birds; but in their stead are all the noxious insects of the world.

Just the place for a man who wanted to hide from some relentless vengeance—or from justice; for surely no slinking detective would follow him there.

Yet humans lived in this place. In this festering pit of the mountain ends which even the great *maias* apes of the jungle shunned was a miserable offshoot of the nomadic Poonan tribes, who might be recognized from the *maias* from the fact that they had learned to erect pitiful screens of branches against the wind behind which they lived.

And since humans lived there, creatures with possible souls, there stood in their midst an elaborate mansion perched high on stilts, a fairy palace of bamboo wattle daubed with the fetid black mud of the river, a castle of three wonderful rooms and a split bamboo yeranda from which a notched pole led, Dyak-fashion, down to the snake-infested ground to serve as the main balustrade and stairway. Not quite so pretentious as some of the fairy palaces along Fifth Avenue; yet over the front door, in a broken jam pot, hung an orchid which would have paid a year's rent of one of the Fifth Avenue florists who supplied them with their poor Epidendras and Cypripedia.

This palace was built by the lone, devoted hands of one of those brave men who penetrate always first and always farthest into the world's vilest spots, a Jesuit father of the Belgian mission. The immediate benefit of his influence was already evident in the fact that the more progressive of the Poonan folk had contrived to make three other walls to their shelters—and in some cases even a roof.

That another white man should suddenly arrive into this festering sweat-bath was a

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thing beyond belief, a miracle happening such as the good padre spoke of. Yet such a one came. Gaunt and burnt and grim, and inconceivably alert for that enervating climate, he slipped up the oozy river in a dugout *gobang* impelled by five muscular Dyaks scarcely less brown than himself, who jumped to it with swift alacrity when a quiet order shot from the compressed straight line of his mouth.

This man was Dickinson. What he was doing five hundred miles up the crooked windings of the Mahakkam, nobody knew. Nobody ever knew exactly what Dickinson was doing. This time he came ostensibly to find out for old Fong-Shi-Kai down at Samarinda how bird's-nests that were black might be bleached white.

The Poonans crawled with their prehensile feet and hands about the dim roofs of the great caves of Batu-Banjong and collected the nests, and Fong paid a hundred dollars Straits for a *picul* measure of them—that is, of the black ones; he paid two thousand dollars for the same weight of white ones. Ostensible reason enough for some astute person to evolve a system of bleaching. And ostensible reason enough for Dickinson's presence with a carte-blanch expense account from Fong-Shi-Kai.

But Dickinson never did ostensible things; he believed very much, in that land of treacherous Malays and wily Celestials and apathetic Dutch officials, in not letting other people know his precise business. Just one or two men there were in Borneo, however, who guessed sometimes that he acted, upon occasion, as the furthest-flung tendril of an elaborate system of information which ended up in Washington.

Dickinson stepped from his *gobang* on to an oozy *tapang* log, the last of a chain which thrust itself slimily from an orchid-hung tunnel and was the only indication that a village lay somewhere beyond in the perpetual pale-green twilight. He stepped warily like a tight-rope walker over this "jungle road" along which the Poonans ran like apes.

Presently he came to a straggling cluster of *iboh* stakes—for the Poonans have the happy custom of burying their dead on either side of their main highways to drive away any undesirable *antu* devils who might wish to come visiting. Several of these *ibohs* were new. Dickinson's eyes narrowed.

"Hm, wonder what epidemic has hit the tribe now," he muttered.

Then the hot, sluggish wind carried to his ears the barking cough of the community *tong-tong* drum, the great eight-foot log which hangs from trunnions like a sixteen-inch cannon and is beaten at times of stress or solemn ceremony. He stopped, balanced on a slippery, half-imbedded trunk, to count the rhythm.

"Hm," he grunted again. "'S up to you to tread the straight and narrow way, Dick, my boy."

He knew that wholesale death among these superstitious jungle tribes was always apt to take an unwholesome turn for the stranger within their gates. In a few more minutes he came to higher ground with a solid path, and then broke into the semi-clearing which the discouraged attempts of man could never keep more than half-way free from the riotous encroachments of vivid green nature.

ALREADY Father VanDahl had heard that a white man was coming, though nobody had gone before Dickinson and most certainly nobody had passed him on the road. The good man received him with the enthusiasm of a lost soul welcoming a Heaven-sent respite.

"*Wilkommen, Mynheer,* a thousand times *wilkommen,*" he beamed with a firm hand outstretched and just the faintest trace of a Holland accent. "You stop with me, I hope very much? But of course, there is no doubt, even now my servant prepares your room."

And in fact, Dickinson could see an immense Chinaman already laying sheets of unbleached drill on the low rattan cane bed.

"Thanks, Padre *Tuan,* I sure will," he said gratefully. "But say, tell me; how in thunder did you know I was American?"

The padre spread out his hands with a comical gesture.

"American or British; one of the two without doubt. The officials of my country do not come striding through the jungles unattended, or at least without an umbrella-bearer."

Dickinson laughed and passed into the spare room of the fairy palace. No excuse was needed. It was understood that he would first bathe—in delicious hot water supplied in an empty Standard Oil kerosene-can—and change into pajamas, and not till

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then "pass the latest." The most news-hungry host in the jungles would not have expected anything else.

Dickinson, in fact, went farther. With cruel deliberation he shaved and dressed himself in clean white ducks before emerging to comply with the amenities of the jungle. Policy, he called it, and, white man's prestige; but a close analyst would have said, vanity of a dominant man who demands that others rate him at his own high standard.

It was the padre's business to analyze human beings. He named these things and his eyes puckered with critical reflection. He was a square-built man with a square face and a square-cut beard which grew high on his cheeks and left only those keen, clever eyes of his to give a clue to his thoughts. Dickinson found himself wondering, as he sat opposite to him a little later at the solid section of a tree braced solidly on four smaller trunks which served as a dinner-table, how he managed to maintain his ruddy vigor in that climate.

"Begin from four months back and tell me—everything," said the priest. "Not a word do I know of the world since I am arrived."

"Four months is a long time to be buried, isn't it, Padre? Ye-es, a long time in this hole in hell—pardon, Padre. I'd expected to meet Father Depelchin here, you know; but Mynheer DeBauw, the *controlleur* down at Moara-Pahou, told me that he'd taken the long trail. How was it? Did you ever find out?"

"I don't know," said Father VanDahl solemnly. "He just sickened, it seems, and he died. He was a good physician too, but he could do nothing."

"*Tuba* root, I suppose, or some other infernal witchcraft of theirs," Dickinson growled slowly. "Raja Brooke's kids went that way, you know. On the steamer on the way home, just as he was trying to hustle them out of the country after naming the eldest as prince in repudiation of his native wife's son. Poor dev— Oh ——, pardon me again, Padre."

The priest waved away the apology with quiet understanding.

"He was a noble man," he said softly. "I was at Pahou when it happened, and I took up his fine work here immediately; but —I don't know. I am not yet ratified by headquarters. Maybe I am recalled yet in place of one who is more worthy."

"Hm. Well, see here, Padre *Tuan*—" Dickinson leaned over the table and held the other with his serious eyes—"since you haven't been here very long, let me give you some advice. I notice that sudden deaths have been pretty common 'round here lately. Well, you know how it is with these wild animals of the jungle. When things begin to go wrong that's the chance for their *dayongs* to get in a dig at the rival religion. Lemme urge you to take a health cure for a month or so down-river; you can come back when the epidemic is over."

The priest only smiled gently and shook his head.

"My friend, you do not understand," he said earnestly. "My call is here. My duty is to carry on the work among these people—unless I may be recalled. It is in higher hands than mine. Besides I have here a study to find out. I hope to hunt down the poison which has baffled so many; you see my little laboratory of research there. It is the work for which I am fitted."

Dickinson nodded. He, too, understood.

"Ye-es, I thought it wouldn't be any use; but I figured I might as well try. I've seen your order do it time and again. Well, I'll do what I can to make things healthier for you; I'll go and call on this local *juju* man and put the fear of everlasting Mike into his soul. Maybe that'll hold him on the chalk-line for a while."

The priest shrugged deprecatingly and smiled, strong in his faith of a higher protection than that of everlasting Mike, and he turned the conversation to demand again news of the world outside. Particularly was he anxious to hear about the great war. Dickinson told him of the latest developments, while the other hung on his words and ate up avidly the details of the shifting advances and reverses on the long Western front.

"It is terrible," he said finally, and crossed himself. "Ah, if one might only find some means to end it all with speed—any means, however drastic. The end would justify it."

Dickinson smiled quizzically as he rose.

"The old theory, eh, Padre? Well, I'll go and look up this *dayong* fellow and shoot a scare into him. That incessant *tabu* drumming isn't a bit healthy."

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THE witch-doctor was squatting outside his hut in a patch of sunlight. He rose and stood with his arms folded across his chest and grinned amicably at Dickinson.

"*Sayeh, Tuan,*" he greeted. "I have been expecting the great lord."

"Huh? *Sayeh, Dayong.* Don't lie. If you were expecting me why weren't you all dolled up in your trappings of toucan feathers and cats' tails and things?"

The man grinned again cunningly.

"These things are for those without understanding, *Tuan.* Yet it is truth that I waited. Look."

And he lifted from the ground a cane tray on which were two immensely long cigarets of native tobacco mixed with *kopo* wood shavings and wrapped in plantain leaf, and a small pot of glowing charcoal. It meant that the man was inclined to be friendly. Dickinson took one and made it the opportunity of a critical inspection of this most unusual wizard.

The man was sturdily built and clean-limbed, not at all old and wizened, as is expected of witch-doctors. His face was surprisingly intelligent and his open grin showed blackened teeth filed to points with the head of a brass nail set in the centre of each. Suddenly Dickinson shot at him:

"You're no Poonan, my clever friend. What is your tribe, and why do you come here to make your magic?"

"The *Tuan* knows all things," admitted the man without hesitation. From the *negri* Madang I come, Laki-La my name. There was—" he stopped to grin again with frank ingenuousness—"it was a small matter of a head, *Tuan*—the man said that my magic was false. But the *prenta* of the *Engleshi* at Brunei has no understanding. It demanded a fine of the value of twenty *piculs* of rubber. So I came over the mountains across the border into the *prenta* of the *Hollandi.* This *prenta* is slow and without revenge. Further, much wealth may be acquired among these animals here."

Dickinson studied the man again in silence. Finally he murmured:

"You are clever, my friend, much too clever. I thought to frighten you with words but since you are so smart maybe I can show you reason." He raised his voice and spoke with crisp command. "Listen then. There is sickness in this *negri;* the people die. Now, there is to be no *pantang naioh* made against this Padre *Tuan,* no head ceremony. If he dies there will surely be vengeance. This *prenta,* this Holland Government may be slow; but if there comes harm to this holy one surely will I see that your head becomes worth ten pounds of silver money—and there are many Dyaks of the river who will follow the trail without ceasing for ten years for that amount. It is a warning."

Immediately the *dayong's* attitude changed. He snatched up his spear which stuck upright in the ground before his door and shook it threateningly in the direction of the mission-house. His face twisted with a passion that was on the verge of the wild *amok* frenzy of the Malay peoples.

"*Tuan,*" he cried. "This is talk without justice. There is no sickness among this people. Animals they are and they have the health of animals. Yet this white *dayong* makes a magic against them whereby they die."

Dickinson was surprised that a man so apparently intelligent should be capable of holding such a childish superstition.

"This is the talk of the wahwah monkey," he said scornfully.

But the *dayong* waved his arms in angry excitement and raved on into a fantastic tale of sorcery and witchcraft.

"*Tuan,* this is truth. I have no quarrel with the white *dayongs,* for their gods can do less for the rain and the crops and the hunting than the littlest of my devils. I am *ma obat, Tuan,* a father of medicine, and I know all the magics; yet this man has a magic which all my craft can not overcome. Listen:

"In the night he comes, having transformed himself by witchcraft into a monster with the face of *boung,* the frog, which walks on its feet and the knuckles of its hands like *maias,* making no sound. In its hand it carries a thing which shines—this I have seen, hiding in the long *rirro* grass—And it passes among the huts; and where it makes pause and points with the thing which shines, there presently enter devils and seize the people and tear their chests, and presently again these die, coughing."

With his own recital the man worked himself into a frenzy. He stamped on his feet and shouted:

"*Tuan,* listen. The *tong-tong* beats even now for three in the house of the chief, a child and two women. When they die—for

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from this magic there is no release—then my reputation as a *dayong* will be as the skin that a snake has left; and after their custom this people will rise tc slay me. But first, *Tuan*—this oath I make on the tiger's tooth—first will I slay this Padre *Tuan* who is no holy man but a *dayong ak*, an evil magician."

Dickinson stood amazed at the man's fury. This story was the wild fabric of the brain of the most superstitious and ignorant savage; yet this man had surprized him by his intelligence. Then an explanation came to him.

"Peace," he ordered sharply. "Your talk is *mabok*, the talk of one who is drunk with the opium smoke—even in this cigaret I have tasted it. There will be no killing. And remember—this oath I make on my own word—a head will be paid for by a head. This is the last word."

YET Dickinson thought it wise to warn Father VanDahl against the perverted fanaticism of this extraordinary man. He recounted the story of his conversation with the wizard, and took the opportunity to urge once again a trip down the river. As he spoke laughingly of the frog-headed devouring monster which inspired such hate in the *dayong's* breast, it seemed to Dickinson for the first time that a shade of apprehension flickered for a moment in the good father's eyes; but the teeth clicked together under the heavy mustache and the priest shook his head.

"My work is here," he repeated with simple resolution. "And, after all, I do not think there is cause for fear. They have an imagination of the extraordinary, these poor people; with the added superstitions of their unfortunate beliefs they can conjure up all sorts of monsters. Doubtless he has seen me in the night—I walk out when I can not sleep; but not, ha-ha, not on my knuckles, Mynheer Dickinson. Rest easy. It is nothing, I am sure. Tell me again, I beg you, of—outside. Quong-Ma will have dinner ready soon and we can comfortably talk, which is a treat for me."

They talked far into the night. The priest, like all of his order, was a man of profound knowledge on many subjects. But his pride and his joy lay in his little laboratory which he had partitioned off from one end of the veranda. He had a knowledge of Oriental toxins which was amazing, and his open ambition was to discover, if possible, the secret of some of those latent poisons with which legend has filled Borneo.

He was astonishingly contented with his mission work among these semi-humans in the world's farthest pest-hole, and his one grief was the precariousness of his little shipments of chemicals from Holland. Dickinson went to bed on his creaking cane-couch amazed at the man's simplicity and tenacity of purpose.

He woke up with the usual vague feeling that something was happening. From long habit the waking came without that start which betrays men who have spent their lives in security, and he lay without moving while he tried to sense what was in the air. Presently it came to him. What had disturbed his sleeping consciousness was that something had ceased to happen. The incessant monotony of the *tong-tong* drum had suddenly given place to the oppressive silence of the inner jungle, only accentuated by the steady drone of its myriad insects.

Dickinson lay still and wondered. Those people in the chief's hut were evidently dead then—somehow that *dayong* fellow, crazy though he might be with the smoke drug, had given an impression of the truth. He wondered whether the man would really try to carry out his threat. In the stillness he began to imagine all sorts of soft-footed dangers creeping up through the dark—that oath on the tiger's tooth was a powerful thing to invoke, he knew. His whole skin began to tingle with the insistent feeling that some stealthy menace was impending.

Then swiftly his mind was made up. With the caution of long experience he began to edge himself off the creaking bed on to the worse creaking floor. Almost of its own volition his long, blue automatic found its way into his belt, and he began to crawl like a long, muscular snake over the straining, loose-laid boards.

He had once seen a head-collecting Dyak crawl that way along the whole length of a bamboo *barrio* and he knew just how to spread his weight, from strong finger-tips to toes, over as much of the surface as possible. His stomach drew itself back to his spine with the imminent expectation of a spear thrust from below through the open planking; but he gained the veranda and from it the priest's room without any more real noise than the ordinary creaking of the rickety structure in the wind.

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Then he came to a perplexed stop. In the pitch darkness he did not know where the bed stood. He listened hopefully for a possible snore, or at least the low breathing of a healthy sleeper. But it seemed that this simple-minded man of the childish trust slept without a tremor, the easy soundless sleep of the just.

Suddenly a terrible suspicion smashed itself into his mind. Great God, was he already too late? That absolutely soundless sleep was altogether unnatural. And then in the next second he was reassured. There was a faint scratching from the direction of one wall and a fainter sigh.

"Padre," he whispered. "Padre, wake up."

His low voice seemed to have the effect only of evoking another sigh and a swish of a sheet. The scratching immediately became louder. It filled his mind with imminent apprehension. He rose to his feet to stride forward. A board shrieked aloud under his tread. Immediately came a rending sound from the flimsy bamboo wattle and a grunting yell of fierce vindictiveness from without. The voice of the priest rose in fearful agony, and instantly Dickinson fired with murderous swiftness through the wall, high, to overshoot the estimated position of the bed. A light thud ten feet below outside, and the rest was drowned in the groans of the priest.

Dickinson rushed into his room to claw 'round in the dark for matches. When he returned the giant Chinaman was already in the room, crouched and facing in all directions like a wild beast on the alert. The priest had dragged himself to a half-sitting position and was holding with both hands on to his leg which bled in quick spurts from a wicked spear gash in the thigh. Dickinson pounced upon him.

"Tourniquet?" he snapped with interrogative command.

The priest moaned.

"Laboratory," he said. "Quong-Ma."

The great Chinaman moved like a cat for all his size, and in two seconds Dickinson was applying the life-saving pressure. His voice was crisply confident as he worked.

"Now, I'm no surgeon, Padre. But you tell me what to do and I'll sure follow instructions."

With the comforting assurance of competent assistance the ashen fear began to leave the wounded man's face and he took hold of himself with a plucky effort. He gave quick instructions with a clear voice for bandaging and dressing. It was rough-and-ready first-aid, but it was thorough. In a short while he was all bandaged up and was able to speak with a twisted smile which left the eyes very grim.

"Two things we have to fight against," he said. "Possible poison, and fever. The veranda is the coolest place."

"And it's darn near daylight," Dickinson muttered. "We'll move you out, 'n' then I'll go gunning for this *dayong* dog; don't think I got him in the dark."

But the priest held up his hand.

"My friend, I beg you, no. Not that. Leave him to me—" he shut his eyes, and with them shut all expression out of the bearded face; but the teeth were set. "I will—speak with the deluded soul. Yes. Promise me."

Dickinson shrugged. Christian forbearance was a very fine sentiment; but this turning the other cheek to a murderous savage was religious hysteria. However, the priest was too sick to be argued with. Dickinson kept his intentions with regard to the *dayong* to himself—and refilled the magazine of his automatic with a cold determination to watch the jungle like a hawk and to shoot at anything that moved.

BUT the day dragged on in uneventful, humid silence. Dickinson busied himself nursing the wounded man. Ideas of crude sick-room comforts began to take shape in his unaccustomed mind. It occurred to him suddenly that the patient would feel all the better for a wash. He cursed himself for a thoughtless fool and jumped up to bring the necessary utensils from his room.

As he lifted the earthen pot which did duty for a basin and dragged the canvas from the empty packing-case which made the washstand he found his memory reaching vaguely back to reconcile some inconsistency. For a minute or so he stood looking in an absent way at the case, and then it came to him. Stenciled in big type across the rough boards was the maker's name and trade-mark:

NORDDEUTSCHE CHEMISCHE
GESELLSCHAFT.

For still another moment it meant nothing to him. Then he grunted: "Huh, thought he

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got his chemicals from Holland," and, the discrepancy located, he dismissed it and heaved the things up into his arms, embracing four or five articles at once in his lean, bony fingers.

The sick man smiled his thanks with his eyes. Since his wound, as the day progressed, showed no signs of poison inflammation he cheered up wonderfully and Dickinson felt that he might well be left in the care of his servant while he scouted 'round the jungle a bit. He did not at all like the ominous silence, and he knew how easily a poisoned blow-gun dart could flick from behind the screen of leaves.

But the patient seemed to have developed an almost childish fear of being left. He caught Dickinson by the sleeve and begged that he would make no hostile expedition against the *dayong;* the wizard must be left to him, he insisted with a sick man's petulance—and, Dickinson would have thought, almost with vindictiveness, had he not known the good man's gentle patience. He promised, of course; but he insisted that he should go 'round the house to look for tracks. With that the patient had to be satisfied.

Dickinson prowled 'round the house like a lean, tawny leopard, reading the signs on the ground. He found the place below the torn wall where the assassin had fallen—on his feet, and his face twisted with disappointment. Everything else was deserted and silent, so he balanced his way up the notched chicken-ladder again.

The big Chinaman with an expressionless face was setting things straight and dusting in a clumsy elephantine manner. Dickinson, sitting facing the patient, could hear him plunging about in the little laboratory behind. Suddenly there was a swish and a tinkling crash of a breaking bottle. Dickinson turned his head with a natural instinct—and was instantly startled into whirling 'round again by the sudden heave and creak of the rattan bed.

The patient had hurled himself half out of the couch, and his face was ashen with an agony of helpless terror. Dickinson leaped to pick him up as the Chinaman's voice came:

"It is all right, Master. It is nothing."

The sick man suffered himself to be lifted up, limp as though newly dead, and lay trembling with the reaction of an extremity of fear.

Dickinson's gun was in his hand and he darted quick eagle glances in all directions; but the surrounding jungle was as silent and undisturbed and shimmery, hazy green as the bottom of a deep pool. The patient drew his attention with a weak complaint that his bandage had slipped. The ensuing half-hour was too busy to admit of asking questions.

But Dickinson was mystified. This priest did not seem to be so firm in his faith of a higher protection as he had wished to intimate. But then, of course, his nerves must be terribly upset.

The rest of the day passed with the patient stedfastly keeping his eyes closed. He was too weak to talk, he said. All that Dickinson could do, then, was to take precautions as far as possible against another murderous night attack. With the dusk he slipped down again to make another circuit of the premises. Like a great gaunt cat he circled through the outlying tree screens and clumps of tall *rirro* grass, and silently like a cat he returned.

Suddenly he stood still. He was surprised by hearing the patient speaking with a strong resolute voice; surprised into alert listening. He had arrived into the tail-end of a conversation—or rather of orders. The sick man was giving instructions to his grim Chinaman in the Malay dialect.

"He must, therefore, be removed, this *dayong,*" the order came with cold finality. "You know what to do. The small one, the one that shines, is loaded. After the meal, then. I will hold the *tuan* in speech."

"*Baik, Tuan,* it is well," the Chinaman murmured.

Dickinson circled out again and came back stumbling noisily over logs and grass tussocks. There was a mystery here, and he hated mysteries—unless they centered 'round himself. What it might be he did not begin to know. But he did know that the deceptive patient would not hold him in speech after the meal.

Nor did he. When the Chinaman had cleared away the few plates Dickinson waited with every nerve of his jungle-trained hearing strained in expectation till the sounds of fussing about in the little cookhouse below had subsided and he could distinguish the stealthy sneaking of heavy feet over the sodden ground. He yawned lazily and got up.

"Guess I'll take a last look 'round, Padre,"

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he said, and without waiting for any remonstrance swung himself over the low rail.

It was an easy matter for him to follow the bulky shape which loomed unnaturally grotesque through the dimness ahead. At intervals he lost it temporarily behind the big grass clumps. This was annoying; so he circled swiftly ahead in the direction of the *dayong's* hut and lay in wait. Almost immediately he heard the heavy footfalls approaching, just 'round the edge of the *rirro* clump in which he lay hid. The next instant it took all his control to restrain a startled amazement.

"A monster with the face of a frog," the crazy *dayong* had said. And there it was. A low-bent head loomed out of the dark, and Dickinson almost fell back on to his haunches with the sudden shock. There were the great goggle eyes, faintly luminous, the pointed snout, and the semblance of a vast mouth. Dickinson shrank back as the crouching weirdness shambled past; and he started again as something glinted in its hand. He looked after it awesomely. Then he whistled a long, low breath.

"Phe-ew! A gas-mask! Now, what in thunder is all this mix-up?"

THE urge of immediate action roused him. He slipped out and almost ran after the dark shape. But there was no need for hurry. As it neared the *dayong's* hut the dark figure sank to the ground and began to stalk the place with infinite caution. This was Dickinson's meat. Almost on its heels he crept, and he was half relieved to find that the heels were shod with thick-soled felt Chinese boots. At the door of the hut the figure rose to its knees and pointed the glistening object in its hand at the opening.

Then Dickinson leaped. His weight, landing on the Chinaman's neck, rolled the latter over and over, and he yelled with surprize and fright, howling incantations against the devils of the woods. But he fought frenziedly; and his strength was so enormous that Dickinson found all his own wire-drawn skill strained to the utmost.

Then there came another yell, and a second dark shape landed astride over the clawing heap and Dickinson felt a thin blade swish past his ear and bury itself in the ground with a grunt of—

"There's for thee, monster!"

With a jerk he freed his face from the wet turf.

"*Bass*, fool. It is I," he panted. "This other is but the padre *Tuan's* great Chinaman. Help that we bind him."

"*Amm-moe!*" shouted the *dayong*. "It is the *Tuan* Dik. *Baik*, I have no fear of the *Olloh*, however great. But an eye-wink, and it is done."

It was done. In almost less than that time the *dayong* had by some swift wizardry produced ropes of twisted cane, and even a smoky dammar-gum lamp, and the big Chinaman lay glaring up at them in a stupor of superstitious fear. The mask lay a little to one side. The *dayong* reached out a wary foot and touched it timorously, as though it might suddenly snap at him. Finding that it was indeed lifeless, he picked it up with his prehensile toes and examined it wonderingly. Then suddenly the brass studs in his black teeth flashed in the flickering light.

"Have I spoken truth, *Tuan?* From the beginning even to the end. The half of the tale is here; the magic only of the poison devil is hidden. Yet that too will I prove."

"Prove?" Dickinson murmured. "How?"

He was prepared to believe almost anything now.

"*Tuan*, I have said, I am *ma obat.* I will make a magic whereby this *Olloh* will speak all that is in his mouth. Hold, *Tuan*, that the light may fall in his eyes."

Dickinson found himself unconsciously obeying this queer man. The heavy-scented blackness of the night, the fantastic shadows against the close wall of greenery, and the sudden authority of the witch-doctor on his own ground, seemed to remove him a lifetime from his own strenuous world.

The *dayong* put the gum lamp into his hand and poised it to suit his fancy. "So," he muttered. Then he suddenly threw himself down on all fours behind the Chinaman's head and glared down into his eyes with an expression of concentrated ferocity. The silent intensity of his malice was such that the Chinaman's eyes slowly set in a counterglare of abject terror and his jaw sagged like a dead man's.

Then slowly and still in deadly silence the wizard drew himself away backward, and without taking his eyes off the petrified captive he reached for his spear which still stuck in the ground. With sudden viciousness he drove it downward and snatched it aside at

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the last fractional moment so that the light from the bright blade flickered past the wretched captive's forehead. The staring eyes strained upward to follow it.

Again the wizard feinted, and again; till slowly the eyes set turned back in the head with the whites showing. Then the sorcerer dropped to his knees again and began passing his hands with swift movements over the fixed bloodless face, drawing the very soul of the man out at his temples.

"*Ja, dua, tali, pat,*" he counted monotonously, following the weaving rhythm of his hands and slowly the eyelids began to lower over the staring balls.

At last the Chinaman lay rigid and hard-set like a monstrous stone image. The wizard rose softly to his feet. His face twitched with excitement and glistened with perspiration from the concentration of his effort.

"Now, *Tuan,* he will talk. His *antu* is gone from him and in its place is mine which is stronger. Whatever is in the back of his tongue, that will he tell."

With his black, pointed teeth, and his excited eyes gleaming in the half-light, he looked like some veritable devil of the deep woods. He crouched like a dark, hungry vampire over the still shape and ordered in a slow monotone—

"What of the magic that brings devils who tear out men's chests, man whose spirit is mine?"

After a fractional delay the petrified lungs swelled with a slow breath and the Chinaman answered in the same monotone—

"This I do not know."

The wizard bent down to bore him with his glare, and it seemed to Dickinson that even the eternal drone of the insects died away and the swish of the branches ceased.

"Speak, man who has been," hissed the sorcerer. "Or your *antu* which hovers in the darkness goes beyond reach. What is the nature of this evil eye?"

In the dead stillness the Chinaman seemed to speak with his last breath.

"This only I know," he murmured faintly. "The Padre *Tuan,* my master, makes magic with many herbs which he gathers and with strange rocks which come from over the black water in a box. These he boils and burns that they smell; and against the magic of their smell he wears the mask of the frog.

"Ever he seeks to imprison some poison devil in a bottle, and on occasions of good omen he takes thereof in the squirt-gun and goes forth to test the strength of the devil. Where he goes and releases the magic, there men presently die. That is all my knowledge."

The laboring voice trailed away and the faintly heaving breast was almost still. The *dayong* rose and faced Dickinson.

"The man has spoken truth, *Tuan;* for against my *antu* he can not lie. Yet the understanding of his word is not with me. Maybe the *Tuan* in his wisdom——"

Dickinson woke from his abstracted fascination with a start.

"A little," he muttered slowly. "Only a little. Much I must guess at—God in heaven, what a horror!"

He picked up the shining syringe gingerly. For a long while he looked at it with narrowed eyes and a puckered forehead. Then suddenly he threw it from him and watched for its phosphorent splash in an oozy pool.

"There is much evil in that thing," he said with a shudder. "Send this dead man home. We must talk, my amazing friend."

The white man was again the dominant force. Obediently the *dayong* turned to the Chinaman.

"Your *antu* which I took I give back to you, *Olloh,*" he muttered as he made long passes with his hands. "Go then back to your poison devil hunter. Yet the release of your *antu* I hold in my hands till you come under the power of his cloak."

Slowly, like a sleep-walker, the Chinaman scrambled drunkenly to his feet and staggered off in the direction of the mission-house. The *dayong* turned to Dickinson.

"What is this thing, *Tuan?*" he asked, awestricken himself at the deadly mystery.

"All, I don't know," said Dickinson. "But—" grimly—"I will go back and surely find out."

"That, *Tuan,* will be not wise; for the *Olloh* will tell. Of my magic and of the waking from it in that magician's house he will know nothing. Yet that we two bound him he will know. And the next one to die of the poison devil tearing at his breast will be—the *Tuan* Dik."

Dickinson's face hardened into a dark, wooden mask and his teeth slowly set together like a wolf-trap.

"Yet I must go," he muttered with set determination. "Many things I do not understand; yet it may be that there are many people making a war in far countries whose fate is mixed up with this thing."

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"*Tuan*, I tell you, this man is no holy man like that other who died. If so, where is his amulet of the four-armed gold, so—" he indicated a cross with his fingers—"which all white *dayongs* carry on their breast. This is no padre, *Tuan*, but a very evil magician."

It suddenly struck Dickinson that he had heard somewhere that the fathers of the Jesuit order were never seen without the insignia of the gold cross. This man had none! And if he had lied about being a Jesuit, then . . . .

"Gosh!" he muttered suddenly. "All the more reason that I should go—but so much I concede. Till the daylight I remain with thee, *Dayong*."

WITH the comparative safety of the daylight, then, Dickinson returned to the mission-house. His outward appearance was one of cheerful nonchalance; but he was as wary as a cat in a strange house. He found the patient sitting propped up in his bed in the veranda anxiously waiting for him and frankly interested to hear about the night's adventure.

"Aha, my goot friend," he called eagerly. "You come to save my life; I die with curiosity. Quong-Ma is—but tell me first, did you bring back my gas-mask? I should have explained, but—you are so ready with that pistol, I feared you would insist on your cruder methods. I sent Quong-Ma, therefore, to frighten the man. But he is, er—incoherent. Tell me, then, what has happened. I do not understand."

Dickinson stood and wondered. Was it just a stupendous effrontery? Or was it possible that the man's extraordinary actions were the promptings of a simple soul unversed in the ways of the world? In the glare of the day the events of the night seemed like a distant nightmare. Dickinson looked at him with his characteristic narrowed eyes and his thin smile. The patient immediately shut his eyes—in weariness. That decided Dickinson.

"Neither do I understand, er—Padre," he said dryly. "We'll talk when I've washed up. I'll use your room, if you don't mind, since my things are out here."

And once again without giving a chance for remonstrance he acted with cool decision. He wanted to go into that room to look for understanding.

He found very little. The room was bare, penuriously so. Just a crude chair and a wash-stand. Dickinson grunted and swiftly uncovered it. "Hm. Same old *Gesellschaft*," he muttered; and while his hands splashed with the water his eyes swiftly searched the room. There was a rough shelf with a few books, among them conspicuous, a note-book. This time Dickinson grunted, "Ha," aloud and he snatched at it.

But it told him next to nothing. It was in a fine script in a language which might very well have been Dutch. It seemed to consist of chemical formulae mostly. Signs, like, CCl_3 $CH(OH)_2$, HCl, and HCN, figured largely among them, and the word Gas, spelled with a capital, was frequently discernible. Dickinson's eyes began to narrow down to hard slits, when the sick man's voice disturbed him.

"My friend, I am afraid my wound is inflaming." The tone was one of quiet resignation. "I wish you would make for me a lotion."

Dickinson came out wiping his hands with ostentation.

"In the laboratory there," the sick man motioned with his head. "On the top shelf."

Dickinson went into the research room and found himself looking at a row of little square bottles.

"I can not see from here," came the weary voice. "I think it is the sixth from the end, or maybe the fifth. Just take a sniff at it, will you? It should have an odor resembling iodoform."

Dickinson reached down the bottle and was just about to comply with the simple quest, when the night's nightmare tore into his mind again with ominously compelling suspicion. The "thing which shines" gleamed balefully once more before his eyes. For a moment he hesitated and then he strode out to the bed with the bottle in his hand.

"I'm no medicine man," he said with terse coldness. "You smell it."

And he thrust the bottle forward and made as though to draw the stopper. And with that action he thanked the Almighty Providence which had implanted the instinct of suspicion in him.

The sudden wild surge of terror which blazed from the helpless man's eyes was a horrible revelation of the very bottom pit of abjectness to which the human soul can descend. Once again he made an agonized effort to hurl himself from the bed; far out, anywhere, only away from that deadly

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thing. Helpless on the floor and entangled in his sheet, he shrieked:

"My God, no! Not that! Don't op— Oh, my God! Quong-Ma!"

And then from some unexpected hiding the giant Chinaman suddenly rushed out at Dickinson with a short wavy *kris* held low for the murderous upward thrust of the knife-fighter. For a moment Dickinson was at a fearful disadvantage. He dared not drop that horrifying bottle. He ducked, of course, from sheer instinct, sidestepping under the knife like a clever pugilist.

He found himself crouched close against the bed; and immediately he thrust a long arm under it and left the deadly crystal where it would be out of the way. And then the knife became an actual advantage to him. For a man armed with a knife will in ninety-nine cases cling desperately to it as being his best weapon, thereby leaving himself with only one hand, and that the weakest, to fight with; and for an alert, steel-spring scrapper like Dickinson, with his lurid experience of many rough and tumble fights in all parts of the Far East, it was no very difficult matter, having got hold of the offensive wrist, to hold it.

Dickinson knew many ways, mostly of Japanese origin, of using an arm as an excruciating lever with which to thrust at precarious angles of an opponent's balance. And the Chinaman's huge strength was further offset by the lamentable fact that he still wore a pigtail. As a negro's most vulnerable spot is his shins, so have Chinamen throughout the ages been beaten by having their pigtails properly pulled.

Dickinson could feel his mastery over this mountain of flesh, and some throwback to a long line of battle-lustful ancestors came over him in a wave. He shouted aloud with the fierce excitement of it and yanked the neck at the end of the pigtail 'round to a torturing angle.

Presently he found a chance to slip swiftly under and heave the howling giant over his hip. It was a good throw, and it brought the great fellow down on his shoulder with a crash which very nearly sent both combatants through the floor.

Very soon Dickinson sat astride of his adversary with an arm and a leg held just on the verge of the breaking-point. He found time now to gain his breath and presently to smile engagingly at his adversary's master, who had contrived to crawl back into bed and lay glaring undisguised hate at last through his pain. Dickinson addressed him with a smile of childlike happiness—he always felt in a cheerful mood after the exhilaration of a good fight.

"NOW we can talk, my benevolent host. Only I don't know exactly what to call you. Should it be the Reverend Father VanDahl, or—the Herr Professor Von-something-or-other?"

The sick man only scowled—this was going to be a very one-sided conversation.

"You are diffident? Well, no matter; there are many other things which I don't know—yet. For instance, why exactly you're trying to discover—a poison devil which needs a gas-mask and tears at people's chests an hour or so after it's been inhaled." Fierce indignation suddenly drove the raillery from his tone. "You hound! I wonder how many poor devils you've experimented on. —— your loathly soul. If I didn't need you myself, I'd make a present of you to the *dayong*—he's coming here presently. But I've got to have you myself. We're going on a journey, you and I—when you're well enough.

"Oh no, don't begin to smile under your beard yet. We're not going down-river. Oh no, we're—" He broke off to bang viciously on the floor with the Chinaman's forehead. "No, sirree. With a little clever talk—and maybe some threats—I know darn well you could bluff the good Dutch officials. No sir, we're going north, across the mountains."

The eyes opened again, quickly, and there was a look of apprehension in them. For the first time the man spoke.

"Over the mountains? Why, you fool, that's Madang territory; head-hunters; they'd kill us on sight."

Dickinson smiled with angelic diabolism.

"You, my genial host, will be killed anyway—that is, I hope so—when the British authorities at Claudetown, or probably Brunei, find out what all these chemical notes mean. As for the Madangs; my very good friend the *dayong* is the biggest noise they have. So what you've got to do is get well in a hurry." The jeering tone grew cold with sudden meance. "And lemme tell you something right here. If at any time, now or on the road, you start any sort of a fuss, I'm going to throw this bottle at you—from a distance."

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JUST THINKIN'

by George L. Catton and Harry M. Moore

Authors of "The Real Sport" and "Not Yet."

I WAS just a lad when I heard the story. Since then I have recalled it times without number. And yet, to this day, I am still pondering over it.

He sat on a stone by the side of the road. His hair was long and thin and white. He said he was "just thinkin'."

"Of what?" I asked.

He smiled—reminiscently, I thought—and replied—

"That when an actual need arises, that which is needed is always to hand to fill that need."

I puzzled a moment. He saw my perplexity. He illustrated—

"For instance, yon Orphans' Home."

I followed his gnarled, pointing finger, and saw a hundred children of all ages romping inside a high, ornate iron fence.

"Two hundred years ago," he went on, "the city here was merely a village, a few scattered homes. There were no orphans, no need for a haven of yon description. And there wasn't any. A hundred years later the village had grown to be a town. But the few orphans within it were cared for by kindly neighbors. Today—" He paused. "Today there are hundreds of dependent orphans in this city of a half a million people. And there—" he smiled—"there's the Orphan's Home just when it is needed."

I pondered a moment.

"It's a county, or a provincial institution?" I ventured.

He shook his head.

"If it had been I would not have been thinkin'. No; it's a private institution. It was founded by, and provided for for all time by, a fund dedicated to that purpose by old Joe Dickenson. Old Joe Dickenson——"

"Well?" I questioned finally.

The old fellow filled his pipe.

"In the beginning of things," he began.

Then when he had lighted his pipe he repeated his beginning.

"IN THE beginning of things old Dame Nature's cornucopia of the noble metals was too full. Some of its contents splashed over. One big drop of gold slipped over the edge and buried itself in the molten rock of what is known today as the Porcupine District. And old Dame Nature passed on and forgot it.

"Ages came and went. The rock cooled and hardened. That forgotten drop of gold lay buried hundreds of feet down into the heart of the granite. The glacial period buried it still deeper, a thousand feet beneath the ice. Man then was not yet.

"Then came climatic changes. The ice melted, slipped and ran into the sea. It took with it the surface soil of the land; rasped down into and carried away many fathoms of the solid rock. And with the coming of man, that drop of gold lay but fifty feet below daylight. But the natives, the redskins, failed to find it. It wasn't needed—yet.

"The yearly changes of the seasons wore

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deeper into the granite that hid it. The Fall rains, frost-expanding in the crevices with the coming of Winter, chipped the rock away. The breed trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company were but twenty feet from that drop of gold when first they paddled up the Montreal River.

"Then came big 'Red' Ross and Louis Bruyère looking for it. That was in 1670.

"Red Ross was a postmaster for the Hudson's Bay Company. He was twenty-five years young. His eyes were blue-gray. Louis Bruyère was a white-haired, brown-eyed squaw-man. Ross had buried his wife in the first year of their life in the New World; and the only incentive left to him was the accumulation of enough funds to take his little daughter back to Scotland for her education. Bruyère wanted a few thousands to invest in a dance-hall in his native city, Paris, France.

"The two men were prospecting when they met. They quarreled over a collision in the river and a wrecked canoe. Bruyère was a little the quicker in his movements.

"Red Ross was buried beside his wife at Fort Matachewan. Three months later Louis Bruyère ran foul of a wounded moose, and the timber-wolves fought over his bones.

"This city was only a village, then. The drop of gold wasn't needed—yet."

The old fellow beside me tapped with his stick for a moment on the ground between his feet. Then he went on.

"A hundred years later, in 1770, that drop of gold was but twenty inches below the grass roots. And that Spring James Edwards and 'Tony' Baxter went out looking for it.

"Edwards was a big man with blue-gray eyes, and forty years of life behind him. He wanted that gold for the maintenance of his deceased brother's two motherless children. He left practically his last penny to that purpose when he left the town here for the North Country.

"Tony Baxter was a middle-aged, brown-eyed gambler. He had lost his heritage gambling. He wanted more money with which to gamble. When he left Montreal for the North Country he made a bet that he'd come back with a million. He lost that bet.

"Edwards and Baxter met and fought over the ownership of that drop of gold.

"Edwards located promising indications in an outcrop of granite on the Montreal River. Baxter tried to jump his claim. Knives flashed. And neither of the two men were ever heard from again.

"This city was only a town, then. That drop of gold wasn't needed—yet."

The old fellow beside me knocked out his pipe. It was then that I began to ponder.

"In 1912, five years ago, old Joe Dickenson went after that drop of gold," the old fellow resumed. "Old Joe was sixty years toward the grave. His eyes were blue-gray. Life to him had been all trouble. But the one big and real sorrow of Old Joe's life was the fact that his wife had died childless. Old Joe was very fond of children. And the Spring that Old Joe went after that drop of gold the breaking up of the ice uncovered it.

"Old Joe registered his claim at Englehart. Three months later he sold out to Gold Mines Limited for three and a half millions of dollars. The following Fall he was dead. And 'Dope' Williams, his sister's son, contested his will.

"Dope Williams was a young man in years. His eyes were brown. His one ambition was to have access to enough money to lean perpetually against a saloon bar and soak himself with liquid poison. But the shyster lawyer he hired failed to prove that old Joe Dickenson wasn't capable of signing his own will.

"The city here was a city of a half-million people. It needed an Orphan's Home. Old Joe Dickenson's will dedicated three millions of dollars to that purpose.

"The gold was needed. And when it was needed it was found."

The old man beside me dropped his empty pipe into his pocket.

I pondered a moment. And the longer I pondered the more I found to ponder over. Finally I looked up at his long white hair and into his faded blue eyes and asked—

"How do you know all that?"

The old fellow smiled. He glanced over at the hundred romping children behind the high fence and answered—

"I was just thinkin'."

I WAS just a lad when I heard that story. Since then I have recalled it times without number. And yet, to this day, I am still pondering over it.

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THE DANCE OF THE GOLDEN GODS

A Four-Part Story. Part One.

By Stephen Chalmers

Author of "The Admiral of the Line," "Chaplain to the Buccaneers," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE TEMPER OF YOUTH

THE door of the goldsmith's dingy shop in Rat Lane was opened from without and there entered a tall man with his cloak thrown about the lower part of his face. Behind the counter a stalwart youth of about twenty, oddly sun-tanned for the place and his seeming employ, arose and stared at the visitor as if he did not credit his senses.

The tall man's very presence in Rat Lane was quite at odds with his appearance, for he was finished to a degree in satin vest, slashed doublet, lace ruffles, velvet cloak and a hat with a single black plume fastened by a large ruby. The moment he lowered the cloak from his fine, high-browed, aristocratic face and revealed the neat, pointed beard resting upon a stiff ruff collar, young Dick Butshead knew him.

"Captain—Sir Walter!" said he, saluting as a sailor does his superior.

"Ah, Dickon, lad. Art tha there," said the visitor with a rare touch of Devonshire on his tongue. Then he added sharply, with a poop-deck note: "The assayer? I have business with him."

"At your service, sir," said an obsequious voice from the doorway of the back room of the shop. "At your smallest command, Sir Walter."

Sir Walter Raleigh and his former cabin-boy turned and took in the picture. Master Simons, the goldsmith, who was also young Butshead's uncle, stood in the doorway with his leathern apron tucked to one side in its own binding. He washed his hands in air with much unction. His bent shoulders and bowed head revealed of his face only the avaricious gleam of eyes peering from under almost hairless eyebrows.

In that moment Master Simons looked the gray rat of Rat Lane and the wharves at its foot, hard by the Tower of London. His nephew's lip curled faintly. There were times when he hated this uncle of his; more frequently now since his return from the Spanish Main after one eventful voyage with the richly dressed man who stood beside him.

Raleigh's face expressed nothing but a mild consideration of the object before him. At Master Simons' invitation he entered the back room. The young man, excited by the unexpected visit and perhaps acting on a habit of attending his late master, followed, closing the inner door after him and abandoning the shop to such customers or thieves as might choose to enter in the meantime.

"Master Assayer," said Sir Walter, appearing unconscious of the young man's unobtruding presence in a corner, "I ha' little reason to trust thee more than the rogues of thy craft who make only a lesser show of their villainy."

"A man must live, excellent sir," said Master Simons, using more imaginary soap.

"Ay," laughed Sir Walter, a little harshly, "and he must even play the other man with similar weapons though they

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be not to his own liking. Yet a year ago thou served me faithfully and well in a small matter."

"Ay, and hath Sir Walter reason to regret my service?"

"Nay. Discretion, when it suits, is many a man's stock in trade. But in a similar matter I would trust thee again."

From his doublet breast Raleigh drew a small leathern package. He opened it and spread the contents upon the table which stood between him and the assayer—a number of pieces of ore, streaked or flecked with yellow. Master Simons' eyes gleamed. He reached out a pair of skinny claws and his fingers trembled ever so slightly as they closed over the pieces of spar. He brought two of the pieces so close to his gaze that his nose almost touched them.

"Eh, eh, eh!" he muttered. "I'd almost take oath, sir, they were the same your honor brought to me a year ago."

Raleigh frowned. The goldsmith noted his displeasure, realized his error of tact and made haste to add—

"That is—of the same."

Raleigh's face cleared.

"Ay, Master Simons—of the same, although that concerns thee none."

"Even so, milord. Mine is to assay. Is it your honor's pleasure?"

"Ay—that, and silence, as before. There has been gossip enough. Happen I trace a word to thee, Goldsmith——"

"Have I not served milord well?" whined Master Simons, with a gesture of aggrieved virtue. "But I take milord's meaning. Others have seen these ores? Say Master Dimock and Master Bulmar of Wood Street, or Master Palmer of the Mint?"

"Goldsmith, thou knowest too much or too little," said Sir Walter. "An I trust thee at all, I must even trust outright. It is as thou sayest. Others have seen and assayed these orès. They are from the same mine as came the ores I brought thee twelve months ago."

YOUNG Butshead, all ears in the corner, remembered that time, the day destiny knocked at his door and he first saw Captain Walter Raleigh of the Queen's Guard, the day the queen's favorite came secretly to the assayer's shop in Rat Lane with the samples of ore brought from some region to the south of Trinidad by his agent, Captain Whiddon, who had gone on the courtier's behalf and at his expense to investigate the strange tale of El Dorado.

That was the time when, making Raleigh's acquaintance, the orphan ward of Master Simons had broken from the shackles that bound him to a saltless existence in dingy Rat Lane and sailed on a wonderful voyage to the Orinoco River as cabin-boy to Captain Raleigh aboard the *Lion's Whelp*.

Up to that time his life had been one of monotony shot only with the radiance of dreams, for life in the goldsmith's shop was not always as dreary as it appeared to the casual eye. Master Simons, frowned upon by the more respected—though not necessarily more respectable—goldsmiths of London Town, did a queer business. To his shop, handily adjacent to the river and the wharves, came many a seafaring adventurer with his little secret store of gold and silver loot, withheld no doubt from his captain in the loot of the Indies and the galleons, and anxious to sell without the knowledge of the Crown, which claimed one-fifth of all such loot.

Then, too, Master Simons had a queer hobby. During forty years of business in Rat Lane he had heard many strange tales. Sometimes the wild but illiterate men of the Main brought to his scholarly eye for translation or plain reading strange old parchments which contained most often a set of prayers or a passage of scripture done in ancient letters with ornate initials and flourishing tailpieces. But occasionally these inscribed documents contained clues or legends concerning buried treasures, mines discovered and lost again, or spots where galleons had sunk with cargoes of ingots.

Not that Master Simons ever acted upon such clues, or ever hoped to. He was dried-up, bent, and sixty years old. But like a dog in a manger, or a miser who covets and cherishes that which he will neither spend nor give away, or because out of some sentimental regret for his lost youth he loved to dream of possible adventures while he plied his assaying chemicals and his little geologist's hammer at his goldsmith's bench, Master Simons had made quite a goodly collection of these legends, narratives, maps and descriptions of strange matters in stranger places.

It was upon these that the boy Butshead,

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during the fifteen years he had spent with his uncle in Rat Lane after the death of his widowed mother in Devonshire when he was but four years old, had fed his imagination—for his uncle had taught him something of Latin, besides assaying—and it was the desire for reality born of these readings that had urged him to sea with Captain Raleigh when that adventurer-poet-statesman sailed on his first quest of the golden Manoa and discovered the new empire of Guiana.

The voyage, in one sense, had been a stupendous success; in another, a failure. Raleigh had found a new country and claimed it in the name of Elizabeth. He had found ores and evidences of vast quantities of gold in that country. But he had failed to find the fabled city of El Dorado with its gilded streets and utensils of pure gold, its riches beyond compare with the wealth of all the Indies, East or West. A shortness of provisions, the flooding of the mighty river and the great falls of its upper reaches had blocked his further progress within—as he believed—but a short distance of the golden city.

But upon the evidences he brought back with him he hoped to induce Queen Elizabeth to support him in a second expedition. It was the knowledge of this ambition of his master, and his own hope that again he might sail with Raleigh, that buoyed young Butshead through the monotonous days in the dingy shop after his return from the wide world to the confines of Rat Lane.

Of late, however, his hope, like Raleigh's, had been dampened by the conflict of opinion in London Town over the facts of that voyage and its fruits. The youth had heard much rumor without understanding why it should arise. Up to that time he had but vaguely heard of one Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and did not realize the ends to which Raleigh's enemies would go in the secret war for the favor of the royal coquette who was queen of England and, since the defeat of the Armada, mistress of the seven seas.

Captain Raleigh—or Sir Walter, as he had been dubbed upon his return—was eyeing the goldsmith narrowly.

"Of the same mine," he repeated.

"That I observe, your honor," said Master Simons, peering at the ores with all the ardor of a blood-lusting animal. "The color is the same."

Still Raleigh eyed the bent figure. With this man, who knew so much, frankness might be the more profitable in the long run. Besides, the goldsmith's nephew had sailed with him and, as his personal servant, was no doubt in possession of more secret information than was common to the rest of the company, even among his most trusted officers. The lad, by the craft he had learned in the assayer's shop, had been of more than cabin-boy usefulness. Probably, too, Master Simons already had heard a full account of that eventful voyage up the Orinoco.

"I will be free with thee, Master Goldsmith," said Raleigh with sudden decision. "I have enemies, as ever hath success. I mistrust their care for my welfare in recent happenings—the lies that have gone forth as to my doings and my motives. Strange, is it not—and I say this as to a master-assayer—that overnight the value of these ores should change in the hands of masters of your own craft from five and twenty thousand pounds sterling to the ton weight to the worthlessness of dross—and all, mark ye, within twenty-four hours?"

Master Simons was still peering closely at the pieces of ore, one by one. His eyes seemed seeking to melt the yellow metal from its embedding rock. Presently he said softly, without looking up:

"All made a similar assay, reported the same high bearing and then all discovered that similar error and about the same time? Strange, my master—very strange!"

"Very," said Raleigh with bitter significance.

Master Simons chuckled maliciously.

"And when honest assayers fall in, one hath recourse to a rogue?"

"I did not say or imply it," said Raleigh with a touch of haughty impatience.

Again the gray rat of Rat Lane chuckled; but then he said with quick decision—

"This gold never came from Barbary."

"Thou sayest that?" said Sir Walter eagerly.

"I am an assayer," said Simons, meeting Raleigh's gaze as if he challenged him upon at least one ground of superiority.

Sir Walter bowed with a fine courtesy.

"And yet," said he, "there be others as well informed who swear that it did, that I sailed to Barbary to gain these ores in order to support the tale of my 'mythical

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Guiana.' They have even bribed some of my crew to swear that I never sailed west of the Canaries."

"There is one they did not bribe, Sir Walter!" cried a voice from the farthest corner of the room. "And he is ready to take oath that he saw ye break that ore from the place Sir Walter knows of, even as I do!"

Raleigh started. Then, recognizing the voice of young Dick Butshead, whom he had temporarily forgotten, a light of satisfaction flitted for a moment about his face. But it was only a momentary flash. Slowly he turned. Coldly, almost haughtily, he stared his former cabin-boy from head to foot. As slowly he faced Master Simons again, leaving Dick Butshead considerably diminished in his own conceit.

"I ha' no need of witnesses to our transactions, Master Goldsmith," said he frigidly.

Instantly Master Simons rushed upon his nephew with the squeak of an enraged rodent.

"Out upon thee, insolent brat!" he almost shrieked, much to the stalwart, sunburned lad's further mortification. "Who bade thee turn thine ass's ears upon the affairs of a gentleman and queen's knight? Who gave thee leave to bray? Out upon thee! Thy place is the other side of that door! Out!"

For a moment the young man hesitated, his blood boiling at the indignity put upon him by his wretched, old, skinflint uncle, whom now he was positive he hated—had always hated for the rat he was. Did he think he was still the orphan brat he used to treat but little better than his dog and as casually feed? Did he forget that he was become a man, that he had sailed the Main and learned to be a man among men?

He looked at Raleigh, although why, after what Raleigh had just done, he should expect assistance from that source might have puzzled himself. That great gentleman was dusting imaginary specks from his cuffs with a lace kerchief while he awaited the adjustment of the minor affair. That settled it.

Young Butshead, his face crimson with humiliation, his heart heavy at the cold-blooded ignoring of him by the man for whom he would have been ready to shed his blood, walked slowly through the doorway into the front shop. Master Simons slammed the door after him.

Behind the counter the young man stood for a moment, his fists clenched, his heart hot, his soul bitter with the call of youth's vanity trampled on.

In that moment he felt that if there was one man he hated more than his miserly, ratlike uncle, it was the lordly, godlike Sir Walter Raleigh, captain of the Queen's Guard, Lord-Warden of the Stannaries and discoverer of Guiana.

CHAPTER II

BULKHEAD GORGES

WHILE Raleigh and his uncle concluded their business, young Butshead sat in the shop brooding and wondering at the change in his hero-god. It seemed that Captain Raleigh of the high seas was one thing; Sir Walter Raleigh, queen's favorite, quite another.

His greeting when he entered the shop, and that touch of Devon on his tongue, had been like the captain who had oft turned to his cabin-boy in the long evenings at sea and talked to him as a father might. Aye, many a night on sea and shore, when trouble, anxiety and doubt weighed heaviest on Raleigh's heart and mind, the great adventurer had laid a hand upon the lad's shoulder in the privacy of the cabin or in the starlit half-darkness of the jungle camp and relieved his soul of its loneliness, whether he ever gave a thought to the boy's capacity to understand.

It was occasions of confidence like these that had deepened the youth's worship of the man. From the first time he saw him—that day a year before when he came to Rat Lane with Captain Whiddon's samples of Guianian ore—young Dick Butshead had regarded him as his romantic ideal of a man. With his haughty face, dreamer's eye and deliberate, quiet manner and speech, he had seemed to the lad as one of those mighty men of whom he had read in his uncle's queer collection of manuscript and book narratives of travel and adventure.

So might Vasco da Gama have looked; so Marco Polo have appeared before the Grand Khan; so Columbus before the sovereigns; so Drake when he turned to gage the Armada and the time it would take to finish the game of bowls before putting out to the attack.

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And this idol had shattered with one speech his own image in the youth's mental shrine. Young Butshead was used to these moods of his late master when for days at a time Raleigh had seemed quite oblivious of the very existence of his cabin-boy. But never before this incident had he abandoned that wondrous courtesy which made him master and leader of men. Never had he seemed so deliberately to inflict humiliation, especially at the moment when indiscretion had been born out of sheer desire to serve. It was strange, and it wounded the lad's vanity to the quick.

A long time Raleigh and the assayer spent together, while Dick Butshead sat in the shop that reflected the dinginess of his own soul. After all, he was but an orphan pauper, subsisting on the bounty of his over-thrifty uncle until that time when he was elevated to the dignity of the most menial position aboard the *Lion's Whelp*. No doubt Raleigh had spoken to him on those wonderful occasions as he might have to his parrot or to the ship's monkey which they got at Curiapan.

Perhaps it amused him to talk to the lad who was born in his own Devon village of Budleigh. Raleigh once admitted with a laugh that he had fished in the stream there, the Otter, into which Dickon, a toddling infant, had tumbled. That experience was about all the lad remembered of Devon, but it seemed at the time to establish a pleasant bond between servant and master.

But now the youth's dream was shattered—this dream of becoming some day a navigator like Magellan or Columbus—the equal in craft, if not in rank, of Raleigh himself, who had taught him in his genial moments some of the rudiments of the navigator's craft in return for what the boy was able to teach his captain of the testing of metals after the manner of the Rat Lane shop.

Boyhood's disillusion and despair, than which there is no greater tragedy, though it be short-lived, now sat upon Dickon like the old man upon the back of *Es-Sindibad*. But presently he was stirred from the gloomy pit of despondency by a shadow in the doorway opening in from Rat Lane.

He looked up quickly but was only in time to catch a vanishing glimpse of a burly figure with a face that was, in the momentary vision, strangely familiar. It was coarsely bearded, and under a broad hat there was a glimmer of red as of a kerchief bound about the skull. The costume, too, as much as he noted before the man ducked out of sight after a hasty glance into the shop, further suggested the seafaring person.

No doubt it was another of the wild men of the high seas, coming to his uncle in secret with a bit of gold or silver picked up and withheld from his masters in some looting affair of the Main. The face had been familiar. But many came to the shop in Rat Lane, and came again after another voyage; and Dick Butshead had a good memory for faces. Possibly, when Master Simons' present distinguished client took his departure, the man in the lane would overcome his bashfulness and come in.

In a little while the inner door opened and out of the rear room came Sir Walter Raleigh, Master Simons bending and fawning at his heels.

"Within three days, then—it is understood?" said Raleigh sharply. "But shouldst thou finish thy assay before, send word to me instanter, at any hour up to midnight. An your messenger find me not at my lodgings in Broad Street, let him come to the Blue Boar Tavern or to the house of Master Francis Bacon. And see that he be discreet—thy nephew who was my servant should serve—and not a word as you or he value my favor."

"Milord shall be served in all respects," said Master Simons, peering up from under hairless brows. "Dickon, open the door for milord!"

Young Butshead obeyed rather sullenly. This was the employ for which he was best fitted, for which circumstance had brought him into the world by way of that same Budleigh village in Devon—to open doors for his superior, born of the same soil.

As he opened the door Raleigh paused and glanced curiously down upon him. He fumbled with the silken and velvet purse that dangled at his left wrist. A shilling, which the young man's hand was not quick to receive, fell at his feet, and Raleigh, leaving the lad to pick it up at leisure, drew his velvet cloak about him and stepped out into the alley.

For a moment Dick stood by the open door staring with blazing eyes upon the

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shilling which blinked mockingly at him from the dusty floor. His soul writhed within him. Many a shilling had he received of the captain and never had he failed to accept with delight, although he found more pleasure in a kindly word of praise from his hero; but now . . . There was something, somehow, of poison in that dropped largesse at his feet.

Presently he picked it up and pocketed it with a bitter, short, dry laugh. If the servant was worthy of his shilling, surely the shilling must be worthy of the servant. Sullenly young Butshead went back behind the counter and again fell to brooding.

His gloomy reverie did not last long, although he clung to it, making a luxury of grievance and resenting that which broke in upon it. Again the shadow darkened the Rat Lane doorway of the shop. Simons' nephew cast a hostile glance at the entrance and instantly, with a curious sense of satisfaction, realized that Raleigh must have been dogged to the goldsmith's shop by some one who was anxious that the captain should not be aware of the fact. Instantly he knew, too, that the seafaring skulker with the broad hat and the skull kerchief was one of the adventurer's late company.

For the moment the figure of a burly man stood silhouetted against the gray daylight of Rat Lane. His face was turned in the direction which Raleigh had taken cityward and on it was an expression of unalloyed malevolence.

AT ONCE Dick Butshead knew the man. He had seen that expression on that same face before. It recalled a picture of the *Whelp's* deck some days out from the Orinoco on the homeward voyage; a man—this man—"Bulkhead" Gorges by name—triced up and the boatswain laying on his bare back ten lashes of the cat ordered by Captain Raleigh for mutiny.

Instantly the youth pulled a book from a shelf under the counter, drew a stool toward him and half hid his face by resting it on his hand and bowing low like an immersed student over the printed page. He heard the door open and saw out of the corner of an eye the seafaring person approaching him somewhat stealthily. He did not look up, but turned a page and became more interested than ever in his book.

"I would have a word with Master Simons," said the man in a low, hoarse voice. "Where be he?"

Master Butshead merely jerked a thumb toward the open doorway of the inner room. Hearing the voice, the goldsmith peered out from his cubbyhole. Scenting trade in the newcomer's manner, he came out and looked over his visitor. He seemed to remember him, and there could be no doubt that the seafaring man knew the person he sought. Without even another glance at the student behind the counter, the seadog walked straight into the back room and shut the door after him.

Instantly young Butshead was on the alert. He swept the book aside, leaped from the stool and tiptoed swiftly to the rear door. He heard a grumbling of voices beyond, but the door was thick and tight. Even if he had chosen to listen at the keyhole—which he would have done if he had thought it worth while—he knew he could hear nothing short of pressing the latch and making a crack. This he dared not do in his uncle's present temper toward him, more so as he had not the faintest doubt that this new interview concerned Raleigh and his affairs, on the other side of whatever scheme was in movement.

Within, Master Simons, after hustling the ores out of sight by throwing his discarded apron over them upon the table, looked inquiringly at his latest visitor.

"Eh? 'Tis thou, Gorges? What dost thou bring?" said he curtly.

"Nothing of the usual," said the man. He fixed his eyes on the apron as if suspecting what was beneath it, and said significantly, "I sailed with Raleigh—there and back."

Master Simons' eyes gleamed with satisfaction. If the man was speaking the truth, here was the answer to every question, the settlement of every doubt about what Raleigh had found—and where. The seafaring man, still with his eyes fixed on the apron, said presently—

"Thou and I could be rich as the Khan of Tartary if——"

For a full minute Master Simons stood there peering at the man, plucking at his fingers, frowning, leering, biting his lips, a thousand and one things chasing through his shrewd brain. Suddenly he reached out a talon and whipped the apron from the little pile of richly gleaming ore.

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"Thou knowest where that came from—the spot? Thou couldst go there again?"

"As easy as from here to the wharves," said the man.

His eyes glowed like live coals and his hands moved toward the ore as if they itched for the mere feel of it. Simons laid a skinny hand over the spar and looked avariciously anxious. At that the man burst out in fury.

"Aye—grab—grab!" he snarled. "That's the way of it from start to finish. Me? I'm not even to look on what's mine, struck out o' the rock wi' my own hands! No matter if it's not just this piece or that, or 'twere Tarry's hands or Scroop's that gathered it—'tis all the same! Raleigh piped up the whole crew and took every grain of it from us, and me that said 'twas mine and backed the rest to hold out for what was theirs—me he took and triced up for ten lashes on the bare back. Said 'twere no gold; yet the same he took from us and gave to the assayers and I have it, not only by hearsay but of the assayers' clerks, that 'tis golden ore bearing as much as twenty-five thousand to the ton."

"Aye," said Simons cautiously, "but the assayers themselves have said, as did he to thee, that 'tis but dross."

"Bah!" said the seafaring man, banging his fist on the table. "Either 'tis they are bribed by those who would take from him support of her Majesty in a further venture, or 'tis another fox's trick of Raleigh himself to blind his creditors; for mark ye, his first voyage was backed by yon fat alderman, Piggott of Shoreditch, and right wroth is he that he hath received no profit of his venture."

"An it were gold," said Master Simons, his scraggy hand lovingly stroking the chunks of metal-veined rock on the table; "an it should happen to be gold, thinkest thou this Alderman Piggott and such others as spread rumor against Raleigh and his find, so that he might fall into disfavor with the queen and be denied her support in a second expedition—thinkest thou such as spread these tales would make a private venture?"

"An they be not fools," said the seafarer.

"But who would lead them to the spot?" asked Master Simons of his visitor, while his thought dwelt upon the well-informed lad behind the counter beyond the closed door. "Hast ever seen this mine, Master Gorges?"

"Ay! Given a ship and a master to navigate her to the mouth of the Orinoco River, I could lead a few trusty fellows to it and bring back our boats laden to the gunwales with the yellow metal. Ay! Given time and arms and provision, I could load our ship to the hatches, and the mountain from which the stuff came would suffer no loss of a spoonful. And we could be back in England while our popinjay Raleigh was still writing books upon it."

Once more Master Simons pondered and fidgeted. He was convinced of the existence of a vast gold mine, but he had no proof of this man's personal knowledge of its location. Suddenly Simons walked to the shop door, opened it and said:

"Dickon! Attend here."

Young Butshead marched into the back room. His face was just as sullen and brooding as when Master Simons had ordered him out of it. Just inside the portal he came to a halt and glared at the seafaring man. Gorges gave a great start and glanced suspiciously from nephew to uncle and back again. His hand moved to the grip of the hanger at his side and he snarled:

"What does this lad here, Goldsmith? Marry, thou hast tricked me! This is that cabin-brat as was spy to the coxcomb Raleigh on the *Whelp*!"

"Nephew," said Master Simons, and at the revealed relationship the seafaring man's face took on a new expression, "dost thou know this man? Thou shouldst, or one of ye is a liar!"

A momentary smile flickered about the younger man's mouth. As quickly he fell sulky again, as if not even meeting an old sea-mate could offset the memory of his recent humiliation.

"Ay," said he indifferently. " 'Tis Bulkhead Gorges."

"Was he of the *Whelp's* company?"

"His back should still bear witness to that," said Dick with a sullen grin. "The high and mighty Raleigh hath a different way with different dogs. To one as holds to have any rights of his own, he gives the lash. To another as tends door on his royal passage he drops a shilling by way of a bone, then flecks his fingers with a lace kerchief as if there was plague on an honest paw."

Bulkhead Gorges seemed more at ease after this speech. Master Simons did not

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seem displeased either. Possibly he had resented the lordly airs of the queen's favorite knight himself and he had but pretended, for policy, his wrath upon his nephew. But both the goldsmith and Bulkhead Gorges were unprepared for the further outburst of wounded vanity.

Young Butshead suddenly produced and dirled a shilling piece upon the table, spat after the spinning coin and marched back into the shop. At the door he flung over his shoulder with unmistakable venom—

"—— the coxcomb and all like him, is what I say!"

The door slammed after him, neither Gorges nor Master Simons noting that it did not latch. They glanced at one another, the malcontent with relief and secret delight that he had found a possible ally right in the goldsmith's shop, Master Simons somehow satisfied that at least he need not fear his nephew's loyalty in the little scheme that was rapidly taking shape and color in his rat-shrewd brain.

CHAPTER III

WEAVING THE GOLDEN FLEECE

THE day after Sir Walter Raleigh's visit to Rat Lane Master Simons was exceedingly active. The little goldsmith labored steadily in his cubby-hole. His small furnace was in full blast and there came the persistent tapping of his hammer and the acrid smell of saltpeter and hot metals.

Sometimes he came out into the back room—but never into the shop—and breathed heavily while he wiped the moisture of labor and excitement from his brow. On these occasions his nephew noted a light in his uncle's eyes, almost the glare of a blood-lusting animal's. Sometimes he would turn that glare upon Dick, who sat brooding in the shop. A deep furrow of speculation would crease the goldsmith's brow; then he would hurry back to his work of assaying Raleigh's ores.

Occasionally, when he needed rest, Master Goldsmith seemed to find a new interest in one of the old manuscripts he kept in a trunk in the back room. Hitherto the chest had always been unlocked, and young Butshead had read at least once over every thing in it. His present curiosity to know which of the old narratives had so recalled his uncle's interest was defeated, for Master Simons replaced the particular manuscript and locked the trunk before returning to his labors. This circumstance further whetted his nephew's desire to know what connection there was between the parchment and the matter in hand.

Gorges was a frequent visitor that day. The sea-dog made himself free of the place, as if he owned at least a partnership in the concern. He and Master Simons held secret conclaves in the back room, from which the goldsmith would presently chase the mutineer with a great show of preoccupation. But late in the evening of that first whole day of activity, Simons closed the middle door between himself and Gorges and the youth in the shop and faced the malcontent with glowing eyes.

"I ha' hastened my task to a finish," said he in an unnecessary whisper, "so, an it turned out as I hoped, there would be time to set our wheels a-turning afore Raleigh grew impatient of results. It is done."

Gorges said nothing, but waited expectantly. The goldsmith slipped into the cubby-hole and presently came back with two small iron basins in which were yellowish metals of obviously different grades, or kinds. They were still warm from the ladle. Bulkhead glued his eyes upon them, while Simons regarded him with a cynical smile.

"One is one thing," said he with a chuckle; "the other another."

"Well? Which is which?" asked Gorges impatiently.

"That is my secret for the nonce," said the gray rat with a slight incoherence of repressed mirth. "Or let us say I ha' come to no decision, and will not till I be ready. That shall be as soon as I have word with such as may prove friendly to a thought of mine—and thine."

"Well?" said Gorges, who began to see a light.

"Enough for tonight," said Simons. "Tomorrow I send my nephew with a word to such as are friends of mine upon profitable occasions. 'Twill be yours to attend here at eight o' the clock the morrow's night, for by midnight or early next day, an I send no report to Sir Walter before, he may come here in a fine impatience; which I would avoid.

"In the meantime, friend Gorges, go

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thou among thy friends of the wharves. Thou didst mention several—one Scroop, I mind, and another, Tarry—who sided with thee in thy quarrel aboard the *Whelp*. Seek them and such others as have a hope to ride in their carriage betimes and bid them hold themselves against a chance to put to sea again on fat shares.

"But bring none of them here tomorrow night. An their tongues must wag on something, bid them spread it further abroad that the *Whelp* never sailed to Guiana, but to Barbary. They must say no more of the ores Sir Walter robbed them of. There were no such ores, save as he brought some from the West Coast to deceive her Majesty into dubbing him knight."

Bulkhead Gorges digested all this gradually. Then a slow grin overspread his brutal face. But it was succeeded by a frown.

"This nephew of thine, Simons," said he. "Thou sendest him forth to gather those friends who, I take it, be no friends of Raleigh. Is the lad to be trusted? I ha' mind o' things thou wot'st not of, Goldsmith. Aboard the *Whelp* he was much pampered by the coxcomb, for that both were born in the same village i' Devon. 'Twere common talk o' the crew that he spied on their doings and sayings and whispered the same to his master. 'Twere even suspect 'twas he taught Raleigh of the ores we held in secret."

"That may be even so," said Simons. "He did curry favor of Sir Walter and was right flattered by him. But there is no hurt like a vain lad's, and but yesterday there was a thing— But ye heard the lad wi' thine own ears, Gorges. The coxcomb slew his love with a shilling. Besides, he be my nephew and to be won by the same flattery which is his weakness. Youth, friend Gorges, is as soft gold in the hands of the assayer, and may be alloyed to his pleasure, profit or purpose."

Gorges, who had been staring at the two little ingots, flashed a look at Master Simons' face. He chuckled and again gazed at the ingots.

"But an the popinjay won him back again with a word?"

"That we must chance. In his present temper 'twill be ours to give him a right conceit of himself. Mark well that thou givest him a consideration in all things beyond his years. Harken to him as to one steeped in wisdom and I warrant thee he forgets his god in comparison with himself!"

With a thorough understanding of his own part, Gorges presently went away. Master Simons spent a greater part of the rest of that night poring over the parchment manuscript which he took from the locked trunk and as securely locked up again before retiring. Without suspecting any design on the part of his nephew to learn which of the manuscripts it was that so engrossed his interest, Master Simons casually frustrated every possibility of young Butshead obtaining even a glance at the title matter, despite the youth's casual hoverings about him.

Next morning Master Simons was up early and had a quiet talk with his sulking nephew. When it became clear to young Butshead that the trend of his uncle's subtle remarks was against Sir Walter, whom he termed an upstart who was wont to sacrifice his friends to his ambition, the younger man's sullenness gave way to a brighter spirit that secretly delighted Master Simons. And Dick was a willing messenger when he went forth from Rat Lane with word of mouth—Simons would risk nothing more—to one Master Bulmar, a goldsmith of Wood Street. The message was this—

"One who doth business in Rat Lane hath assayed the same ores that others hath, and, if Master Bulmar hath a thought to his own profit, he would do wisely to repair this night to Rat Lane and enter by the alley door at eight o' the clock, bringing with him such friends as may be trusted in a venture concerning."

Master Butshead bore the message, delivered it and returned to the goldsmith's shop. Master Simons was restless all the afternoon and evening thereafter. He tried to forget his suspense and impatience in many re-perusals of the manuscript which he took from the chest. His nephew would have given much to know which item of the queer archives it was. He was familiar with them all. But which was it? If he only knew that, the connection might be established and clear. But his uncle always put the rusty key of the old chest back in his pocket.

The goldsmith's restlessness became acute. He longed for darkness and the

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shutters up. Then it would be safe. Raleigh would hardly come in the night. And Master Simons did not wish his report forced until he had had time to base it upon whatever circumstances arose in the meantime.

ONCE Master Gorges appeared that day where he had not been expected before the hour of rendezvous. His visit was brief and this time he spoke openly before Butshead. He had found Scroop and Tarry and several other malcontents of Raleigh's Orinoco company. They were as eager to cry quits upon their late captain as—

"Aye, as Dickon here," said Gorges tentatively. "He be not the only one hath a score to settle."

"I'd go further than Guiana to serve him," said Butshead with a queer note, but not raising his head from the book he was reading.

Gorges, reassured, winked at the goldsmith, who presently dismissed the mutineer, bidding him fail not the hour and the rendezvous.

At eight o'clock that evening, a full hour after Butshead put up the shutters for the night, into the gloom of Rat Lane stole two separate groups of men who had no need of cloaking to be unrecognizable in the poorly lighted thoroughfare. Simons' shop, toward which they headed from opposite directions, was in absolute darkness and appeared deserted. The first group disappeared up a narrow alley which ran along the east side of the shop and at right angles to the lane. There a door was cautiously opened, revealing a deep slant of light through Simons' cubby-hole from the doubly enclosed back room of the goldsmith's shop. The first comers were two—Bulkhead Gorges and another man, who might also be of the sea but was obviously used to wielding some authority aboard ship, despite his dissipated appearance. Gorges whispered in the ear of the goldsmith who, still doubtful, summoned his nephew. Young Butshead failed to recognize the stranger with Gorges, who thereupon whispered at more length.

The stranger was one Captain Barbary, a master-mariner who had been "unfortunate"; but he was a navigator, and such were his circumstances—and possibly the morals that had reduced these circumstances—he would welcome any command and ask few questions.

A few minutes later the party was joined by Master Bulmar, a merchant-like person whom nothing could have drawn to Rat Lane and the company of his shadier fellow-craftsman but the lure of yellow gold. Master Bulmar, the Wood Street assayer, was accompanied by two other men, both of whom were quite unknown to all the others, even as was Master Bulmar to all but the goldsmith and his nephew. But after a whispered colloquy between Bulmar and his fellow-assayer, the latter nodded satisfaction.

One of the strangers who accompanied Bulmar was Alderman Piggott, of Shoreditch; the other a Master Fox who might—or might not—be a secret hireling of Raleigh's great rival and enemy—milord of Essex. They were not introduced by their names—by any names in fact, but they presently established their right to a seat at that queer conference.

Alderman Piggott, a fat, red-faced man who continually perspired, glanced around the room, and particularly at the doors, with obvious anxiety. At a word from Master Simons, Butshead and Gorges proceeded to secure and bar the shop door, the middle door, the door leading into the goldsmith's cubby-hole workshop and that outer door leading into the side alley.

Then they all sat down at the table, all more or less nervous, except Master Fox, a little, sharp-featured, sharp-eyed man, whose notice nothing escaped. Master Simons came shuffling to the head of the table with bent shoulders and wringing his hands with unction.

"Good masters," said he, with the air of one about to state a situation, "we are here. The doors are barred. None, I be sure, saw ye come. None will see ye go. It may be that great things will result, or again it may be that we must forget we ever saw one another."

Alderman Piggott seemed relieved at this statement. He grunted. Master Simons, encouraged, proceeded. He drew from his breast two little ingots of metal, now detached from their iron basins, and laid them deliberately on the table.

"Recently," said he, "I received some ores for assay. In some manner—" his eyes turned upon Master Bulmar with devilish cunning—"the ingots became mixed and,

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as heaven is my witness, I know not which of these came from these ores and which hath lain in my shop a while."

Master Bulmar sneered and studied Master Simons with narrowing eyes.

"Tomorrow—nay, tonight, even—I must make report to my patron," continued the goldsmith, his rat eyes darting glances from face to face. "I am at a loss, save as I ha' heard Master Bulmar hath sampled some ores of the like kind and source. Mayhap Master Bulmar will tell us what he found?"

There was a sudden silence. Master Bulmar bit his lip. He was not prepared to take the initiative. He stared across at little Master Fox, as if on his face he might read a clue to procedure. Master Fox was stroking his bare chin. It was Alderman Piggott who broke the silence with a sudden explosiveness.

"I care not what games ye have in mind," said he, "so long as I be not dragged into scandal. For, mark ye, I am an honest man that seeks only what is his—a proper return upon an unwise investment made through a tricksy upstart. To that end am I here, and if ye can show me that it would not be casting good money after bad, I am ready to spend a further shilling to regain what I ha' lost."

Bulmar was still trying to read Master Fox's face. Simons broke in with unctuous tones.

"An I ha' heard aright, good master," said he to Piggott, seeking to draw him out, "ye did put moneys into the venture of one who sought the gold of El Dorado and that he, finding the same, claimed there was not enough in his first trial to warrant a division."

"Aye—so he said!" stormed Master Piggott. "But I ha' heard different besides. I ha' heard so much of difference that I know not what is truth and what lies. I ha' heard that Raleigh—" ah, he was naming names. The situation was taking shape—"that Raleigh found no gold, or that what he found was dross. I ha' heard that he did find gold—mountains of it—that it assays high price, that he brought but little, so that those who did finance his first venture might be disappointed for the benefit of the private following expedition, which should shortly be of the queen's charge, that——"

"The queen's Majesty will finance no expedition of Raleigh at this time," interrupted Master Fox with quiet assurance. All eyes turned to him. He went on quietly: "As we are here to one end, my good friends, frankness were a jewel. Let Master Bulmar speak freely."

"Then," said Bulmar with a shrug, "I did find in these ores the value in gold of three and twenty thousand pounds sterling to the ton. Another lot assayed by my fellow, Dimock, master-assayer, also of Wood Street, yielded six and twenty thousand and nine hundred pounds to the ton, the same being verified by Master Palmer of the Mint."

"Then why," Alderman Piggott cried, "is it given forth presently that in each and every case there was error, that it was but base metal?"

Master Fox smiled and countered with a question:

"Why are we here? Would Master—I failed your name, good sir—have an expedition go forth in which he had no claim to profits?"

"Ah!" said Alderman Piggott sinking back with a slow smile. Then he turned to Master Simons. "And what, pray, does thine assay show, Master Goldsmith?"

"This," said Simons, laying a finger on one of the metal ingots, which was of a duller and less lusterful yellow than the other, "is worth but thirty shillings to the ton. The other is, in the ore, worth twenty-six thousand pounds sterling to the ton.

"But," he added hastily, and with the same cunning side-glancing. "I am still in doubt as to which came from the ores placed in my hands by the good Sir Walter, misplacing having taken place upon my bench and confusion resulting. Yet tonight must I make report, and such report, I fear me, must be based upon a consensus of your valued opinion upon which is which."

AGAIN there was a long silence. Bulkhead Gorges sat with his mouth open. This subtlety was too much for his wit. Young Butshead also seemed at sea. The strange mariner whom Gorges had introduced as Captain Barbary sullenly glowered around as if he was impatient of the preliminaries. Alderman Piggott waited in a kind of virtuous aloofness, anxious only for his investment. Master

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Bulmar threw up his hands as an alternative to washing them of responsibility. It was Master Fox who took the helm.

"I think, masters and gentlemen," said he with a smile, "we may proceed upon an understanding which need not be discussed. I am sure—" with a shrewd glance at Master Simons—"our host will presently discover that the base metal to his left came from the ores placed in his care, and that to the right, assaying twenty-six thousand pounds, comes from some other secret mine which it shall be our business to discover."

Master Simons bowed. All the others stirred under their relief. This was certainly pouring balm upon troubled consciences without serious compromise to any. Master Fox proceeded.

"You require a ship and a crew. You require at once a navigator, arms, provisions and matter for trade. Are these readily forthcoming?"

"We ha' the men," said Bulkhead Gorges, in his element again. "I ha' seen to that—some as, like me, need no navigator once we reach the mouth of the river. Captain Barbary here is ready to command thereto and back, and this lad—" nodding toward Dick Butshead—"who hath more knowledge of Raleigh's courses than any and hath himself looked upon the mine, is in 's way a half-navigator, having been taught by yon coxcomb himself. I would say that good Master Butshead be given gentleman's rank under Captain Barbary, who, I'll warrant ye, could make a fledged navigator of him afore we sighted Trinidad."

Young Butshead started and his face flushed with a kind of boyish pride and pleasure.

"Aye, aye," said Master Simons, beaming upon the lad, "and 'tis but right he should ha' some part in this venture above the common. He goes as my envoy, for I would ha' a lay in this venture."

It was remarkable how quickly and completely subterfuge had been dropped. Master Fox nodded satisfaction at the swiftness of procedure and said:

"The rest is a mere matter of moneys. If the venture is agreed upon, and it is understood that no names shall be spoken save in secret, I am commanded by one who is my principal and is interested to sink five hundred pounds in the fund."

Alderman Piggott, Master Bulmar and Master Simons visibly brightened. They knew that this generous supporter behind Master Fox was no other than the Earl of Essex, even if his lordship's purpose was as much to defeat Raleigh as to gain profit. Master Bulmar, one of Essex's tools in the matter of the false report of the assay, promptly offered five hundred pounds, some of which may have been on behalf of his friend, Master Dimock, of Wood Street. He made no mention of Master Palmer of the Mint. Alderman Piggott, after much blowing and puffing of red cheeks, only checked himself in an equal offer with Essex, through Fox, to ask—

"But if Raleigh sails and gains the mine ahead of our craft?"

"Raleigh will not," said Master Fox with a subtle smile. "He hath this day been appointed captain under milord Essex, who sails presently against the Spanish fleet at Cadiz. The appointment hath the approval of the queen's Majesty."

A broad smile passed from face to face around the table. Only Master Butshead and Captain Barbary did not appreciate the trick. Perhaps political subtlety was beyond them.

Then Alderman Piggott offered his five hundred pounds. All eyes turned toward Master Simons. He had voiced a wish to be a participant in the venture and to send his nephew as his envoy. How much, then, did he propose to contribute to the effort to forestall Raleigh and reap the wealth of his gold mine in Guiana?

Master Simons smiled and drew from his breast a roll of parchment. He laid it on the table and said:

"Good masters, I am a poor man, but, by good fortune, rich in knowledge. Here is the narrative of one, Juan Martinez, which none alive but my nephew, besides myself, hath ever read with understanding."

Dick Butshead, who had been all alert from the moment the mysterious parchment appeared upon the table, gave a great start. Now he knew which of the items of the archives it was. The narrative of Juan Martinez—the strange, almost fabulous tale that in his boyhood had appealed more than any other to his warm imagination, the tale that more than any other had fired him with desire to adventure forth with Raleigh and his company; the tale that—but Master Simons, his eyes fixed shrewdly upon his nephew while he spoke to the others, went on:

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"This man, Juan Martinez, alone of all men, found the road to the golden city of Manoa, which he called El Dorado. Who reads what was written from his own lips as he lay a-dying at San Juan de Puerto Rico, may go to the place of his discovery and reap a harvest of pure gold without the digging of ores and the peril of confiscation by the Crown through Raleigh's prior claim, which might then be honored. Search ye for his mine by all means, good masters, but an ye find it not, ye have this and the riches of the Peruvian Incas in thy hands.

"My masters," he concluded, "I am a poor man, but this is mine—mine—and I lay it against fifteen hundred times fifteen hundred pounds!"

He smiled confidently around the table and thrust the parchment toward Dickon Butshead.

"Read, my envoy and nephew," said he. "Thine eyes are better than mine and mayhap thy Latin as good."

CHAPTER IV

PRINCES AND MEN

THE meeting in the back room of the goldsmith's shop was still in progress while the watch of London Town was crying "past twelve o'clock and a fine, clear night." But there was one empty seat—Dick Butshead's.

After the reading by him in rough English of the narrative of Juan Martinez from the old Latin of the Puerto Rican monk who had written it down originally, Dickon had been despatched without further delay to find Raleigh and place in his hands Master Simons' report on the ores, together with a single small ingot of yellow metal.

For the reading of that narrative had had a strange effect upon the company assembled in Rat Lane. The meeting which had opened with mutual distrust and proceeded in terms of cold-blooded business suddenly was transformed in atmosphere. The spirit of romance, the old urge of adventure, suddenly took possession of the dingy room and all in it. It rang in the voice of young Butshead, who hardly glanced at the pages as he swiftly recited the contents of the old parchment. It was as if he translated from memory, as indeed he more than half did, and his boyhood's old love of that tale was infectious to a degree.

Even Alderman Piggott, to whom hitherto ventures of any sort appealed only in terms of profit, sat open-mouthed and goggle-eyed. The sea captain, Barbary, leaned forward with a gleam in his eyes and a certain eagerness to be up and setting his course. Master Fox listened intently, and his little, sharp eyes narrowed and flashed occasional meaning looks at the excited Master Bulmar.

Bulkhead Gorges grinned and nudged Barbary, as if he had known the narrative of Juan Martinez for years but had never mentioned it lest anybody call him a liar. But Gorges, like many men of the Main at that time, had indeed heard rumors of this narrative of Juan Martinez without ever having seen it in writing, or even suspecting that it had ever been set down.

Briefly, although they heard the matter in greater detail from the reading of young Butshead, while Master Simons beamed, grinned and wrung his hands with joyous unction, this Juan Martinez was, according to the narrative, master of munitions to one Ordas, a Spaniard, who had many years before attempted to discover the golden city of Manoa.

This city, the old legend ran, was founded by the Incas of Peru somewhere in the region of the Amazons after the survivors of the murdered Atahualpa's people escaped from their Western empire, which had been sacked by the ruthless Pizarro. The expedition of Diego Ordas ascended one of the tributaries of the Orinoco, which was then thought to be one with the Amazons.

Several hundred leagues up the river Martinez was condemned to death by Ordas for some breach of discipline, but escaped in a *canoa* and traveled farther up the Orinoco into the unknown interior. He lost his way in the mazes of the river branches and fell into the hands of the very Incas Ordas was seeking to find.

Believing Martinez to be one of their natural enemies, the Spaniards, the Indians led their captive through the jungles until they came to the city of Manoa—which Martinez named, of his own fancy, El Dorado—and its emperor, Guascar, a nephew of the murdered Atahualpa, Emperor of Peru. Guascar, learning that Juan Martinez had quarreled with Ordas, the leader of the Spanish expedition which was

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attempting to advance upon his city, showed his gratitude by sparing the adventurer and commanding that all courtesy be accorded him.

Then followed in the narrative, as written down later by the Puerto Rican monk, the dying adventurer's description of the country and the city of Manoa, or El Dorado. Less attention was paid in that hour by young Butshead's hearers to the details of how Martinez got there than to the wanderer's statements that the streets of the gilded city were washed with a coating of gold and that the meanest household utensils in the dwellings of the inhabitants were fashioned of the precious metal. Martinez, on his death-bed, declared to have seen ingots of gold piled like billets of wood ready for burning. The rest of the narrative mainly dealt with the peculiar customs of the Incas, some of which—as at least two of those present were destined to verify—were amazingly strange.

Seven months Juan Martinez dwelt in El Dorado; then, tiring of the Incas' curious orgies, surfeited with the gold which was useless to the adventurer in his circumstances, learning, also, that disaster had befallen Ordas and that he and the survivors of his expedition had left the river, Martinez expressed a desire to return to civilization.

The king, Guascar, provided him with a *canoa* and food and as much gold as he could carry. This gold, the narrative explained, was taken from a glittering mountain of the precious metal not far from the golden city, and Guascar's own people assisted in collecting such of it as the adventurer desired. With his fabulous treasure Juan Martinez drifted down the river. He passed through many perils; starved and suffered capture many times at the hands of the various Orinoco tribes.

These took from him every grain of his golden cargo, for gold was a scarcity among the Orenoqueponi of the delta. Miraculously Martinez escaped with his life, only to surrender it shortly after his arrival, a human wreck, at the monastery of San Juan de Puerto Rico. In what dark episode of the Indies the priestly manuscript was looted and finally brought to the goldsmith's shop in Rat Lane, it is needless to surmise.

It was after the reading of this narrative that all common sense departed from the conspirators in the Rat Lane shop. The fever of gold-lust joined hands with the spirit of romance and adventure, and plans for the new expedition were rapidly brought to a head. The first move was that young Butshead should go forth into the night—it still lacked an hour of midnight then—and, seeking out Raleigh, deliver to him Master Simons' assay report, the nature of which was decided without further discussion.

Leaving the weavers of the golden fleece whispering with their heads together, Dick went straight to the lodgings of Sir Walter Raleigh in Broad Street, and tapped for admittance.

The door was opened by something in the nature of an apparition. To any who had not sailed with Raleigh, or known of an exchange of hostages with one of the Guianian tribal kings, the figure in the doorway might have seemed an optical illusion.

It was a tall youth with straight hair, almost Greek features and a complexion of a light chocolate hue. His shining, blue-black hair, streaming about his naked shoulders, was bound around the brows with a curiously wrought fillet. For clothing he wore only a loose mantle made of a jaguar's hide and held at the left shoulder by an enormous green stone. On his otherwise bare feet were a pair of sandals of woven grass.

"Barasai!" said the Indian, a Summer smile lighting his soft, fark face.

"Taruma!" said Butshead, delighted at meeting again one whom he had learned to like as a comrade of his own years in the *Whelp's* long homeward voyage.

He held out his hand, which the Indian grasped and shook with a curious pump-handle movement.

"Me glad see Barasai," said the Guianian simply: it was his best English and as near as he could come to the name "Butshead" in his own tongue.

"Me glad see Taruma, great Prince of Aromaia," said Dickon. "I come see Captain Raleigh."

Taruma understood, but had to think up words before replying.

"No here," said he. "Capuaralli he go from here. He go see princes of your country at place where princes drink plenty."

Dickon grinned, surmising that Sir Walter

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was spending the evening at the Blue Boar Tavern with certain literary friends. To Taruma these were necessarily princes because they were associates of Caparualli, who—and he never lost this illusion—was "husband" to the greatest of princesses, "Ezrabeta Cassipuna."

It was to Taruma's royal uncle, Topiawari, King of the Orinoco region called Aromaia, that Raleigh had first shown the painting of Queen Elizabeth and silver coins of the realm bearing her regal head. Old Topiawari, a wise king among savages, had sent his nephew and heir, Taruma, to England at Raleigh's request, and had held as hostages two of Raleigh's company, young Francis Sparrow, the scrivener, and Hugh Godwin, who was a maker of maps.

Butshead would have proceeded on his search for Raleigh, but as he talked idly with Taruma in the doorway of the Broad Street lodgings he fell to thinking of what complication might arise when Captain Barbary's crew came to Topiawari's country and found themselves face to face with Sparrow and Godwin. These men were worshipers of Raleigh. They would know at once that Barbary and his company had stolen a march upon their captain.

What then? No doubt these two men had built up their own, through Raleigh's, influence with Topiawari's tribe. They might oppose Barbary's company, betray them and their scheme to Topiawari, and another massacre would be added to the many in the annals of the Orinoco. Still pondering the possibilities of Sparrow and Godwin, whose existence he had all but forgotten, Dick Butshead continued to talk idly with Taruma.

"You great prince, too, Taruma, great prince of greater country—bigger. You see Ezrabeta? How you like?"

Taruma's face clouded over. He laid a hand over his heart from which he knew his feelings arose.

"Place inside no say glad," said he. "*Ezrabeta cassipuna acarewana* (Elizabeth is a great queen), but no me, too—after Topiawari, King of Aromaia? But no so. She make me feel what-kind beast and laugh. Place inside no feel glad—no like Ezrabeta land. Place inside hungry for go home-place."

So. Taruma wished to go back to his native land. The fact set young Butshead's mind off upon further possibilities. Suppose Taruma, Prince of Aromaia, accompanied Barbary's company to Guiana? His friendship further fostered, and his great influence as the tribal heir. . . .

BUT time was flying. A voice from the street howled—

"Past eleven and near twelve!"

Raleigh had said before midnight. He would not risk his displeasure after that hour. After some further idle words with Taruma, he again shook hands with the Guianian prince. Taruma again laid a hand over the region of his heart and smiled.

"Place inside tell me you good. Taruma have glad feeling for Barasai and Capuaralli."

That was all, eloquent in its brevity and simplicity. Butshead went away and turned toward the Blue Boar Tavern, his feelings somewhat mollified and tinged with a sense of guilt. He knew the deliberate lie which he was party to in that little ingot and the written assay which he carried in the breast of his doublet.

At the Blue Boar he somewhat diffidently peered into the parlor of the tavern. There were a number of rather noisy bloods there, drinking at tables set in a half circle around an open fireplace. The center table, from which the rest curved away like two wings, was occupied by two men, one large and fat with a wart on one side of his nose, the other slighter though not unrobust, with a high brow and a pointed beard. These two were engaged in some hot argument, the larger man roaring and pounding the table with his fist, the slighter man quieter in manner and evidently scoring with a light sarcasm that elicited shouts of mirth and much applause from the listeners.

There was an empty seat at the middle table, pushed aside as if some one had but recently left it.

Young Butshead feared to intrude upon this company, but from the doorway scanned every corner of the room in search of Raleigh. It was thus his presence was discovered. The slighter man with the peaked beard had just silenced his ponderous opponent with a quip that set the rafters ringing, and the fat man with the wart had sunk back with a gesture of defeat, when the latter's eye caught young Butshead in the act of peering around the edge of the doorway. Glad, perhaps, of a diversion from his defeat, he roared:

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"Come hither, young sir! Thou must be of the Orejones which, in the Spanish, are the people of the long ears. What wouldst thou, youngster?"

It was on the tip of Butshead's tongue to retort, "Warts," but he said, modestly enough, his cap twisted in his hands—

"Prithee, good masters, is Sir Walter Raleigh of your company?"

"Raleigh!" cried the fat man, and for some reason his face turned red and the company laughed again.

Butshead did not know that the subject of his recent defeat was this same Raleigh. The man with the wart on his nose covered his embarrassment by again turning his heavy guns on his opponent. He pointed a large forefinger at the other's remarkably high brow and cried:

"Tap, gentle youth! Tap upon that dome of knowledge! Raleigh was last seen being engulfed therein!"

"But nay, good Ben!" said the other glibly. " 'Tis a fault of all thy plays to answer a civil question with a riddle. Now, an thy marionette were a shipmaster, wouldst put thy Fleet Street imagining against the true voice of the billow? What knowest thou of topmasts and main courses, and cables and ground anchors and the master's whistle? Thy marionettes in a tempest would content them with pulling a hangman's rope and crying, 'Yarely! Yarely!' between blasts of mouthy bombast!"

He turned to Dick Butshead as the laughter subsided and fat Ben loaded his gun for a counter explosion.

"Nay, good lad," said he, "Sir Walter Raleigh should ha' stumbled o'er thee where thou hidst in the arras there. He hath but gone. But happen thou be no runner for his tailor, thou mayest find him at the lodgings of Master Spenser in Wine Court."

To Wine Court young Butshead betook him, unconscious that Taruma had been nearer the mark than he thought when he supposed that princes drank together in the Blue Boar. The fat man, Ben, he did not know, but he surmised that the slighter man with the quiet, rapid voice, the glib wit and the high brow was of Master Burbage's company of players at the Globe Theater on the Embankment.

He found Raleigh at Wine Court, but he was not alone. A young Irish manservant admitted that Sir Walter was within with his master, Edmund Spenser and his friend Master Bacon, but— He put a finger mysteriously to his lips and drew up his face in lines of grotesque gravity.

"They're at it ag'in," said he. "If iver I see dear ould Cork I'll betake me to Castle Blarney, for faith he was there an' I swear he must ha' swallowed the stone. Wheesht!"

Still with his finger to his lips he tiptoed to a door and cautiously opened it. Just inside he stopped and waited patiently for some one within to end a speech before announcing a summons for Sir Walter. To young Butshead's ears came Raleigh's voice quite distinctly. His tone was high-pitched and with a tinge of bitter amusement.

"Ye gods!" he was saying. "Under another's star I seem to ha' been born. Another's fame is granted to me, my fame to others. What think ye of this, that I brought the smoking-weed to England when indeed it was Francis Drake? Aye," here he broke into a laugh, "and he carries another's fame, also. I grant ye he saw the Pacific, but Nunez de Balboa 'twas who discovered it nigh a half-century before. No doubt posterity shall give me credit that I discovered Virginia, which I once saw but as a cloud low on the horizon, and God knows to whom posterity may credit the Pacific."

Raleigh might have laughed outright had he known that a great poet named Keats was to attribute that peak in Darien episode to "stout Cortez."

"But there!" Raleigh went on. "So 'tis to serve a queen, who thinks less of the gold of El Dorado than of its possible likening to her hair in a well-turned sonnet. Thinks she this night I am sleepless for joy that she hath appointed me captain under Essex—who hath great love for me after her Majesty—when mine enemies—among whom I count my friend Essex—desire naught but to rid the queen's ears of my plea for Guiana. 'Tis like leaving a treasure unguarded while one sallies forth to scotch snakes."

Raleigh's voice then continued in a frank tirade against Queen Elizabeth, whom he was in the utterance of terming a vain old crow disguised as a strutting peacock, when both Master Bacon and Master

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Spenser, to whom he had been pouring out his troubles, silenced him with a warning, "*Ssshl*" It was then the young Irish servant spoke.

"May it plaze yer honors," said he, clearing his throat. "There is a young spalpane without—meanin' a youth, yer honors—wishing to spake a word with the Governor-Giniral of Munster."

Spenser's Irish servant always addressed, or referred to, Raleigh with what he considered his most glorious title. There were other Irishmen who considered Raleigh's Irish campaign the worst blot on his history.

But Raleigh, on the point of impatiently refusing audience with anybody at that hour and in Spenser's lodgings, suddenly remembered something. He came to the door, gave but one glance at young Butshead, and came out into the little lobby. He laid a hand upon the lad's shoulder and looked inquiringly into his eyes. Dickon reached to his breast, but Raleigh stayed him.

"Ah!" said he. "But not here. Go ye, Dickon, to my lodgings and there wait for me. I shall come anon."

Out in the street again, where the watch was crying, "Past twelve o'clock and a fine, clear night," Butshead walked rapidly to the house in Broad Street. Again he was assailed with a sense of guilt. The touch of Raleigh's hand seemed to linger on his shoulder. Raleigh's eyes seemed to be still looking deeply into his mind, not suspicious of the lad's integrity, but merely as if trying to read the answer to all the doubts that had been raised in his own mind by the asseverations of his enemies and their tools. And young Butshead could dispel all these doubts with a word—were he so minded.

HE HAD barely arrived at the house and been admitted by Taruma before Raleigh himself appeared on his heels. He cast aside his cloak and without a word held out his hand to Dick Butshead. Simons' nephew drew from his doublet the little ingot and the sealed paper.

Raleigh needed but one glance at the ingot with its dirty, lusterless yellow hue to know the contents of the paper. Nevertheless he broke the seal and read slowly. His face darkened, his jaw became set; bitterness, an onset of age, seemed to descend upon him in a few seconds. Through set teeth he muttered almost inaudibly—

"Iron—copper—sulfids——"

Then he slowly laid both paper and ingot upon a small table and sank into a chair beside it. He laid a handsome head upon a delicate, ringed hand and was silent for a while. At last he said in a broken, muffled voice:

"Dickon, lad. Mine enemies have been too many and strong. I am beaten."

The man's disappointment, the fellowship of that moment of humiliation and the words, "Dickon, lad," had a singular effect upon young Butshead. Tears glistened in his eyes, his under lip quivered, and all at once he sprang forward and laid a strong grip upon Raleigh's shoulder.

"Captain—my master—Sir Walter!" he gulped. "They lied! They lie now! I know. I know—everything!"

And then, as Raleigh sat up, alert, astonished, his eyes burning with a mingling of rage against his enemies, triumph that he was at least forewarned, and gratitude to the stalwart lad, Dickon poured forth the whole story, not omitting to add that he, himself, had for a time been traitor to his service and was to sail with Captain Barbary's company.

For a while after Butshead had finished and stood there with downcast eyes, a picture of manly penitence and honesty, Raleigh sat regarding him curiously. Then he said slowly:

"Dickon, an thou goest with them thou wilt never return. They will see to't. Thou knowest too much."

"But I am going!" said Butshead, looking up with a new light in his eyes. "I go to serve you, sir—secretly. And remember, sir, there is Sparrow and Godwin, both sworn to you, and——"

Butshead glanced at Taruma, Prince of Aromaia, who had been standing by like a copper image draped in a jaguar's skin, listening but not half understanding, save that the "places inside" were moving within these two white men. Perhaps the connection of Taruma with the hostages in far Guiana brought the same thought to Raleigh's mind.

"Taruma," he said quietly, "what would thine uncle, Topiawari, King of Aromaia, do to the enemies of his friend, Capuaralli?"

"He kill," said Taruma simply.

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Raleigh smiled with some bitterness. So the Lord Warden of the Stannaries, Vice-Admiral of Devon, captain of the Guard and queen's favorite knight was depending for friendship and support upon two half-savages and a cabin-boy. Again his eyes turned to Butshead. He arose and laid his hands upon the youth's shoulders.

"Go, then," said he. "Remember thou art my man, Dickon Butshead, and whisper to Sparrow and Godwin that so also I hold them. Taruma's word shall serve against my enemies with his uncle, King Topiawari. And as bodyguard I give thee Taruma, Prince of Aromaia, who is hostage for the safety of all who venture to the Orinoco region.

"For the rest, I care not what they find, even if they load their ship with gold that is mine, only that ye return, Dickon Butshead, bringing word and proof that Walter Raleigh is neither dreamer nor liar.

"Go, then; and God be with thee, lad, and between us two."

CHAPTER V

THE STOWAWAY

THE experience gained by Raleigh in his first voyage to Guiana had taught that the best time to set out from England for an exploration of the Orinoco was the month of July, which is high Summer in England and about the end of the first rain-season in Guiana.

The start of his first voyage had been made in February and he had encountered Wintry weather in the temperate zone and the period of high floods on the Orinoco.

This did not deter Captain Barbary from making his start even a month earlier in the following year, 1596, only two months after the night of the meeting in Rat Lane. In fact, he urged the sailing of his new command, the *Fearless*, a two-hundred-ton brigantine, in the unpropitious month of January, for the reason that, did Raleigh even yet succeed in gaining support for a second voyage, he would hardly be likely to make a start before the early Summer months, particularly if he was unaware that any vessel had stolen a march upon him or was planning to do so.

By January tenth, the *Fearless* was ready to weigh anchor in the harbor of Plymouth. All of her company were aboard, except Captain Barbary, and at his coming the command to heave at the windlass was expected.

The affairs of the secret expedition had been ordered most guardedly. Since that night of the meeting in Rat Lane Dick Butshead had neither seen, nor had word from, Sir Walter Raleigh. The knight's last words that night had been:

"And now, Dickon, until thy return, I know thee not, nor dost thou know me. Thou art traitor to my cause. Act therefore toward me as thou wouldst to an evil conscience. Be blind and deaf to my existence. And should I pass thee by, or drop a shilling at thy feet, take it and scowl!"

As for Taruma, Butshead had neither heard of, nor seen, him either, and he was not a little puzzled concerning Raleigh's plan regarding the Indian prince and the part he was to play in the game. If Taruma was to be of any assistance toward protecting Raleigh's interests by his influence with his uncle, the king, and the tribe of Aromaia, his return with Raleigh's still possible expedition six months later would avail little. Yet Butshead had heard nothing of any proposal that Taruma return to his native land aboard the *Fearless*. Such a proposal would, of course, have aroused suspicion of Raleigh's knowledge of what was toward; and Raleigh was the last man supposed to know anything about it.

Barbary was not expected aboard before nightfall, shortly after which the *Fearless* would take advantage of wind and tide to slip out to sea under cover of darkness. The men forward were under hatches, and for once an adventure ship was putting to sea with a remarkably sober crew. Bulkhead Gorges had set a good example and had made it clear to every man of the crew he had picked himself that an unmarked departure was essential to their ends.

Besides, he managed to convince his followers that they were partners in a great transaction which would make them all rich. For the matter of a carouse, there was plenty of liquor aboard and the farewell debauch could as well, and more conveniently, take place within two weeks at the Canaries.

Gorges was king forward. For that matter he was practical master of the whole ship. Barbary was merely navigator and Dick Butshead, by virtue of his uncle's finger in the pie, was nominally an officer

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and a gentleman, quartered aft, but in Gorges' cunning brain, at least, of little more importance than he had been aboard the *Whelp* as captain's boy. What Bulkhead had in mind for both Captain Barbary and young Butshead when they had served his purpose was something which he kept very much to himself; so much so that none suspected he had any intentions at all concerning the future.

For the present, Barbary was essential to the navigation of the *Fearless* to the mouth of the Orinoco. Butshead was indispensable for more reasons than one until the gold was obtained, either from Raleigh's mine or the golden city, and that gold brought aboard the ship at the sea-edge of the delta. After that, a navigator might not be so essential to Gorges' daring plan. As a seaman he believed he could steer a course by the Gulf Stream and from Virginia run before the steady northwesterly winds to some point in England.

But for the present, even Butshead himself felt that he had nothing to fear of Gorges, no matter what wild dreams he and his following of rascals might entertain. His shrewd uncle, whom recently he had come to despise more than ever, had insured him against bodily attack for a time at least. The young man, who was now in the cabin below the poop, was himself the document of his own insurance and in a peculiar way that was the characteristic work of Master Simons, the gray rat of Rat Lane.

The alluring narrative of Juan Martinez had been his contribution to the Guiana expedition, but he had not delivered the document itself either to Barbary or Bulkhead Gorges, or even to the nephew who was his envoy. Instead, he had seen to it and assured his fellow conspirators that the lad could recite the contents of that document from memory.

"But," had been the sense of the general objection to his scheme of safeguarding his own interests, "suppose, in the perils of this expedition, the lad should meet with—some mishap."

"That no such mishap shall befall my envoy is, therefore, your concern, my good masters!"

Master Simons had chuckled and he had left the others to take or leave his condition as they saw fit. They were compelled to accept the situation.

Thus, as a valuable human document in his own person, Dick Butshead found himself aboard the *Fearless* on the tenth day of January, 1596, with a charm upon his life, a light sword at his belt, a dress better fitting his new rank, and a secret gravity of purpose which had made a man of the lad of yesterday.

The sight of the youth, of whom Gorges had seen little of late, himself being engaged with the assembling of his crew and the provisioning of the ship in coöperation with Barbary and their principals, had somewhat disconcerted the malcontent. Not until the young mate came aboard the *Fearless* did it occur to Gorges that Dickon was more to be feared than a mere lad with a weakness of vanity or a living document to be handled with judicious care if they would benefit by the secret directions of Juan Martinez that he carried in the safe of his brain, his mouth the lock and his tongue the key.

But—perhaps it was the sense of his new dignity—the young mate who came aboard on the morning of January tenth seemed suddenly to Gorges to have become an entity to be feared and handled with even more than judicious care. For the first time it entered the mutineer's brain that Dickon Butshead was a man grown, with more than the average man's strength; and that peculiar temper or vanity of his made for a doggedness of purpose, or mere "butsheadedness" that might prove difficult.

As for Butshead at the outset, he maintained his dignity from the moment he came aboard, conveying at once by his word and manner that, whatever his uncle's purpose and the conception of his position in the mind of Gorges—and no doubt in the mind of the crew, schooled by the ringleader—he, Butshead himself, was mate of the *Fearless* and meant to live up to his part. Gorges sulked for an hour, then passed a word among his fellows. For the rest of that day, until Captain Barbary came aboard, they obeyed the young mate's orders with a cheery willingness. And such were the circumstances presently that, as the days passed on that outward voyage, the youth's position became more and more assured and, as a result, Gorges' fear and hatred of him grew.

The first circumstance was that Captain Barbary was brought aboard just as the tide served, and he was incapable of anything but swallowing another double jorum

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of rum and falling into his hammock with all his clothes on. Thus, at the outset did Barbary's weakness reveal itself.

BUT the *Fearless* put to sea that night, nevertheless. It was Gorges himself who urged upon young Butshead, nominally in command, the wisdom of this course. It was Butshead who issued the orders, but it was Gorges who sailed the ship. He knew the Channel's every current and vagary of wind and in these waters practical seamanship was more necessary than the science of navigation.

By morning Captain Barbary was comparatively sober and, after a few applications to the bottle, was able to take charge. He was somewhat dazed upon reaching the deck to find the *Fearless* under all sail, bowling southward before a raw northeast wind and with the coast of France a bleak, gray cloud away on the larboard bow.

Barbary remained sober enough to bring the brigantine safely around the French capes that day and set the course which was to last for many days across the Bay of Biscay for the North Cape of Spain, before he again took to his liquor. For two days thereafter he lay in his hammock, a sodden log, waking only at intervals to satisfy his craving for more Lethe.

But Gorges and his men kept sober and sailed the ship with little regard for the orders of the young mate, who presently refrained from giving any, save as he supported Gorges in all things pertaining to the execution of ordinary seamanship. But he was ever on the alert and observing and, as Gorges did not fail to notice, rapidly acquiring an understanding of the workings of the ship.

It was the day after the rounding of the Spanish capes—the fourth day out from Plymouth—to which responsibility Barbary had roused himself from his slough of bestial drunkenness, that there occurred an incident which at first had little significance to any but Dick Butshead.

He and Captain Barbary, the latter taking advantage of his comparative clearheadedness to instruct upon the next angle of the course, were seated in the cabin over the charts, when the lesson in striking a reckoning which Barbary was trying to teach Butshead was interrupted by a great deal of shouting, brutal mirth and a hammering at the cabin door.

Without ceremony, Gorges, whose position was nominally that of boatswain, or sailing master, burst into the cabin. Behind him came his crony, Scroop, and another seaman named Tarry, holding up between them a yellow-gilled figure clad in a jaguar skin, half covered by an old coat, beneath which the miserable wretch shivered in the still, biting sea air.

"Ho, Barbary!" cried Gorges. "We ha' found a rat under hatches and it hath a familiar cut to my eye!"

Barbary stared. The strange captive was an unexpected apparition in these waters, although it was at once apparent he hailed from somewhere along the Main. Dick Butshead stared, too, but his surprise was of a different order. He recognized in the sickly-hued person in the jaguar skin and the old coat—Taruma, Prince of Aromaia.

Taruma was not pretending illness either, and Butshead remembered the young Indian's sufferings during the first week out from the Orinoco on Raleigh's homeward voyage. He was about to step forward and assure Taruma of the presence of a friend, when he observed that the young prince was looking at him with dull eyes in which there was, or appeared to be, no sign of recognition. Butshead decided to wait.

"What ha' ye there?" snarled Barbary, who was nervous.

"Stowaway!" said Gorges, with a burst of coarse mirth.

"Heave him overboard!" cried Barbary, fury of liquor reaction seizing him.

"Aye, aye, cap'n," said Gorges with a grin, "but first a twist o' his thumbs may wring out o' him how he comes aboard the *Fearless;* for mark ye, Barbary, an I be not mistaken in the cut o' his prow, this be the same blackamoor Raleigh brought into England out o' Guiana. He were Raleigh's man. Happen this to be a trick!"

Barbary glared out of bloodshot eyes at the ague-shaken, seasick Indian. He ripped out a question in his broad seafaring dialect which, impossible English to the ordinary landsman, was worse than Latin to poor Taruma, who muttered something in a faint, incoherent voice. At that, Barbary again lost patience and ordered, by way of dismissing a trivial matter, that the stowaway be left to sink or swim. But Gorges was not satisfied. His eye was evilly upon young Butshead.

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"Happen the mate can say a word on this," said he with a grin. "Ye were both more than thick aboard the *Whelp*. Mayhap ye know, Master Butshead, how this blackamoor comes so neat aboard the *Fearless?*"

"It ha' taken me aback," said Dickon with utter truth. "But mayhap he can speak if he but understands a question."

He advanced a step and faced Taruma, calling him by name.

"You know me, Taruma?"

The unhappy heir to the kingdom of Aromaia lifted his leaden eyes slowly and gazed dully at his questioner. Presently a glimmer of intelligence came over his face, and through blue, chattering lips he said:

"You—Barasai?"

"Aye, Butshead—Barasai. How you come inside big *canoa?*"

"*Eaboa ka di*," said Taruma, then in his abbreviated English, "Me sick," which meant the same thing, but they thought he referred to his present condition.

Butshead framed his question differently, and Taruma answered in a way that explained the sickness to which he referred.

"Me sick inside place for go home Aromaia. No feel glad for Ezrabeta country. No feel glad for live Capuaralli house. Place inside heavy for too much rain and all time cold shake. Me sick for Taruma place where sun warm all time."

Butshead translated, filling in the gaps, and at once the situation became clear even to Barbary's clouded intelligence. Taruma had developed a dislike for England. He had simply grown homesick, run away from Raleigh and made his way to Plymouth. The old coat he wore over his jaguar skin he had simply stolen somewhere, or been given it to cover his partial nakedness by some kind-hearted individual.

"Aye, aye," said Gorges. "Good enough, I grant thee; but happen 'twere more than luck he picked out the *Fearless* to stow aboard. How's that, Master Butshead?"

That point had been troubling the mate, too, while he glibly translated Taruma's accounting of himself. He was not prepared to answer it just yet. Perhaps Taruma had come aboard the *Fearless* with no other thought, intent or excuse than he had stated. If so, he could explain the point himself. Butshead asked him.

Taruma at first did not comprehend the question, but presently he turned and pointed at Gorges himself.

"Palimouta me come in Capuaralli *canoa*," he said, "and Palimouta (Plymouth, he meant, no doubt) me go back. Same place Palimouta, me see he—" indicating Gorges—"same with Capuaralli on big *canoa*. Me follow he and hide in big *canoa*, same maybe go back Taruma land."

Still Gorges was suspicious.

"Walked to Plymouth!" quoth he. "'Tis a good two hundred mile an' more!"

"That's nothing to Taruma," said Butshead. "His uncle, old Topiawari, walked a hundred miles to pay his respects to Captain Raleigh at Morequito, and Topiawari's said to be near a hundred years old."

"Aye, but how got he from the shore to the *Fearless* unobserved by any?" said Gorges.

Butshead did not pretend to know, but asked the question of Taruma, who shivered as he replied—

"Me swim."

"By ——!" put in the man Scroop with a responsive shiver. "I believe 'im, and only one thing could make a man do it. I know. Once in the month of December—aye, 'twere a Christmas Eve—I swam four miles to Dover Beach off a queen's ship to which I'd been trepanned. I saw the lights o' my own home—I was a lad then—and I did it!"

"CHRISTMAS—lights o' h-home!" muttered a thick voice from behind the cabin table.

All eyes turned upon the captain, and then discipline—if ever there was any on that ship—went to the winds. Even Butshead roared with laughter. Barbary had burst into sudden tears—the tears of sentimental inebriation. Becoming aware that the laughter was at his expense, Barbary at once lost his temper. Dashing the tears from his purple-hued cheeks, he brought his fist down on the table with a crash and yelled—

"Heave 'im overboard, I say!"

"Aye, aye. It may be the wise course, Captain," said Butshead coolly; "but mayhap 'twere well to consider what venture we be upon, and this blackamoor is nephew and heir to the old King of Aromaia, who holds the gateway to El Dorado. He may be a powerful hostage for old Topiawari's friendship."

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Barbary, striving to regain his lost dignity, stuck out an underlip and presently allowed that the matter was well worth considering. As a result, Taruma, with never a glance of gratitude at Butshead, was taken forward and given clothing and something hot to drink, pending a further weighing of his case. But as they took the Indian from the cabin, Butshead did not fail to notice a curious look that Gorges leveled at him.

When the young mate turned again to Captain Barbary, hoping for a continuation of that lesson which might at least enable him to keep the vessel upon a general course, he found the master of the ship measuring out a cup of rum with a shaking hand.

"Lights o' home—Chris'mas Eve!" he sort of sobbed as he unsteadily brought the liquor to his lips.

Over the rim his tearful eye lighted upon his mate. He lowered the cup and said, almost challengingly—

"You had a mother once?"

"I had," said Dickon, astonished at the thunderous manner of the gentle charge.

Barbary slowly drank the rum, set down the cup, wiped his mouth and seemed to regain control of his feelings. Presently he glared at his pupil and roared at the top of his voice—

"If the brig tacks in ten points, how many will she wear in?"

"Twenty-two," said Butshead promptly.

Barbary thought hard for fully fifteen seconds, his right hand clapped to his brow to aid his calculation. Presently he smiled in relief and airily waved an arm.

"Right, m'lad! Right!" he muttered, rather incoherently.

But again he was seized with a variation of his drunken mood. He scowled at Butshead as if he resented his ability to answer even a simple question in seacraft. His hand fell to the handle of the heavy hanger at his belt and he half unsheathed the ponderous blade.

"Out upon thee! Out! Away!" he roared.

As Butshead retreated through the doorway he saw the captain reel back and fall his full length upon a locker which had been converted into a settle.

Barbary did not appear on deck again until, the Rock of Gibraltar sighted and the mate failing to arouse the master to a sense of further responsibility, Gorges, the boatswain, entered the cabin in a rage and slushed his commander with a bucket of sea-water.

Then, at Gorges' cutlas point, he was induced to set a course for the Canary Islands.

CHAPTER VI

TARUMA TAKES CHARGE

THIRTEEN days out from Plymouth, aided by good luck and favoring winds, the *Fearless* sighted the Canary Islands and made the port of Fuerte Ventura.

Gorges had been there before, many times. All that Captain Barbary knew of his vessel's arrival in the bay was when, alarmed perhaps by the unusual quiet aboard, he came forth from the cabin. He stared at the land looming before him under the starlight and discovered the *Fearless* at anchor and the ship deserted by all but the mate, Dickon Butshead, and an Indian dressed in a jaguar skin.

Barbary, when the mate came in answer to the master's hoarse summons, appeared a wreck. It seemed that his debauch was at an end, his disease run its course of periodical attack. He had lost flesh and he was weak in the knees. The purple bloat had left his face, which was now drawn and pallid. Occasionally he was seized with attacks of trembling.

His shifting gaze settled at last upon Taruma, who had followed Dick to the cabin. The Indian was eying Barbary with a curious keenness. Barbary, becoming aware of the piercing eyes bent upon him, grew nervous.

"Who's that?" he quavered, turning to his mate.

Butshead reminded the captain of Taruma's identity and the manner of his coming aboard, whereat Barbary seemed relieved. Yet he continued to eye Taruma furtively, the while he asked about Gorges and the crew. He seemed to find a fearful fascination in the jaguar skin, which was again Taruma's sole attire since they were in warmer waters.

Butshead explained about the crew. The moment the bay of Fuerte had been made and the anchor dropped, the admirable discipline—of a kind—which Gorges had maintained since the vessel left Plymouth had been abandoned. The whole

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company, except Butshead and Taruma, had taken to the ship's larger boats and gone ashore.

In that moment Butshead felt pity for the master whose existence had been so completely ignored. Barbary, as if realizing that he had sacrificed his hold upon the men, bowed his head in remorse. His crew had gone ashore without leave from the ship which the same crew had navigated to port while its captain lay in a drunken stupor.

But suddenly Barbary looked up with a gleam of determination in his eye. For that night the captain was himself again. With the help of Butshead and Taruma he lowered away the brigantine's skiff and, with Dickon at the oars, went ashore, leaving an Indian in a jaguar's skin in sole charge of the *Fearless*.

No sooner was the skiff beached opposite the little Spanish settlement of Fuerte Ventura than the presence of Gorges and his company made itself manifest in a great uproar from the region of a small *posada*. Toward this Barbary strode, his weakness temporarily overcome and his nerves tautened by his rage—rage against himself which he purposed to vent upon others.

Before the *posada* they found the innkeeper wringing his hands in the center of a group of natives who looked up scowling as two more white men appeared upon the scene. Gorges and his wild crew had taken charge of the *posada*, driving forth the innkeeper and his whole family. Inside, the place was a wreck. Empty bottles, broken bottles, tables and chairs, many of them overturned, had been ruthlessly swept up against the walls, leaving the floor comparatively clear for dancing. Behind a counter was the rascal, Scroop, hilariously drunk, and his friend Tarry assisting him in setting up fresh-opened bottles of all sorts of liquors; and they were not lacking in customers.

On top of a table which had been pushed into a corner sat a couple of rather pale-gilled young Spaniards, strumming away for dear life on their *bandolons*, to the music of which a roaring mob pranced in bear-like antics.

Chiefest among them and towering head and shoulders over the painted, bedizened *señorita* he hugged in the dance, was Bulkhead Gorges, roaring drunk and conducting each and every ceremony with unceremonious blasts of his foghorn voice.

There were other women in the place, all of a class, probably commandeered off the street as were the two frightened musicians. But there were not enough women to go around, and there was not enough floor room to accommodate the masculine couples who plunged around in dizzy gyrations, colliding with one another, falling in heaps, cursing or laughing, or, resenting the mirth of those who cheered their mishaps, engaging in frequent altercation and fist-fight.

Into this scene dashed Barbary, the sweat of exertion and nervous weakness rolling from his face. But his eyes were agleam with a stimulating rage. His voice lost its quaver as he roared above the row of the *bandolons*, the crashing of the bottles and the clumping of heavy feet—

"Belay!"

The dancers stopped and with them the music, if such it could be called. The appearance of Barbary had the effect for a moment of the dead arisen. Into a strange, sudden silence came only the sound of wine gurgling from an overturned bottle on the counter. Scroop, Gorges, Tarry, all hands, were staring at the apparition in the doorway. Behind it was real flesh and blood; the mate, Butshead. Something—the old instinctive fear of ship authority, perhaps—held the drunken crew in spell for a moment. Then Gorges, first to recover, said with a guffaw:

"—— me! It's old Barbary!"

"Aye, it's old Barbary, an' barbary I be!" the remorseful captain shouted hoarsely. "Who gave ye shore leave, ye rats?"

"Marry, old Barbary," said Gorges insolently, "but watchin' for two weeks thyself carousin' in the poop would ha' made even a fish tire o' sea-water. Thou gavest the word o' shore leave wi' thine own boozy mouth. Hast thou no mind o' 't, Barbary?"

At this sally there was a ripple of laughter. Barbary knew the boatswain lied. In his struggle to overcome his weakness he had not closed his eyes in two days and two nights. No one had entered his cabin in that time.

"There was the mate, Master Butshead!" he cried hoarsely.

"Eh?" said Gorges with a pretense of marvel and poor memory. "Oh—he—the cabin-boy!"

And he grinned past Barbary at the silent youth behind him.

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Butshead's face flushed at the deliberate insult. He was quite unarmed and defenceless, but upon the impulse of hurt vanity he stooped, picked up an empty bottle that lay within reach and hurled it with all his force at the grinning Gorges. The shot was fairly true. The bottle, although Gorges saw it coming and ducked, caught the side of his head over the right ear. As the burly boatswain reeled a stream of blood rippled down his neck.

He recovered with a yell of fury and drew his cutlas. Instantly the *posada* was filled with an uproar of cheering, protesting, encouraging, mingled with screams of fear from the bedizened *señoritas*, who immediately joined the two young Spaniards with the *bandolons* in flight to the street. The company of the *Fearless* formed a circle and waited for the finest of all exhibitions, a man-fight to a finish. To give more room, a half-dozen climbed upon the counter and began to lay wagers.

The wagers were not upon the contest between Butshead and Gorges, for, noting at a glance that his mate was unarmed, save for another bottle which he had seized up, Barbary unsheathed his own weapon, which he had buckled on with the forethought of experience before leaving the ship.

"Have at thee, Gorges!" Barbary snarled, pushing Butshead back with a single thrust. "Even the lad could prick the courage out o' ye an he had a skillet in his hand. Have at me, Gorges!"

"Aye, thou sodden squilge!" cried Bulkhead, baring his right wrist and swishing the air with a preliminary cut of his hanger. "I'll tap some o' the rum in thee, for o' blood thou canst ha' little left."

He poised for an attack, yet waited as one on the defensive. Barbary did not advance and presently lowered his weapon with a sneer.

"So thou would have me attack, Master Gorges? Does the master of a tall ship dirty himself by entering the forecastle to punish? Nay! Come into the waist, thou fo'c's'le rat. Meet me atween-decks!"

For a moment, Gorges, unheeding the urgings and gibes of his fellows, stood with narrowed eyes peering at Captain Barbary. Suddenly he slammed his cutlas back into its sheath and said:

"Nay, I ha' no cause o' fight wi' thee, Barbary. Thou hast had thy carouse; we but ask leave to have ours. My affair is with the mate, but so being he is unarmed and a mere stripling I forgive him the bottle till such time as he ha' put hair on his chest."

Amid a howl of disappointment at Gorges and cries of "milk-liver" from his ready backers, Barbary sheathed his own weapon.

"Milk-liver! Yellow as a D'ego!" jeered Scroop, Tarry and his mates.

Gorges turned upon them with a wink of his off-eye.

"Belay there!" he said quietly, so meaningly that the uproar ceased. "Drunk as I be, an' drunk as you be, lads, let's keep a hold on some sense. I'll square me with Barbary, too, but I ha' no mind to trust the navigation of the *Fearless* to Raleigh's cabin-boy on a dead reckoning."

HE SAID it so openly, so frankly, that the men caught some of his common sense instantly. They were after gold—more gold than ever a company set forth to find in one place before. There would be perils and fighting a-plenty before they brought it back to England. The dance would begin soon enough. The first thing necessary was to reach the place of the gold. To that end Barbary was a first necessity. Once they had the gold aboard—ah, that would be different. They would chance it then, if it so pleased Barbary and Gorges to settle their quarrel and it so pleased the turn of Fortune to wind up Barbary's account in canvas with a couple of shot at the feet.

"Good enough!" said Barbary, when he saw that the fight was not to be—yet. "Ye ha' the master's leave to continue, but I ha' this to warn ye." He was speaking English that the native listeners at the door could not understand. "Fuerte Ventura hath no love for English seamen; and we come here with no such backing o' power as did Raleigh and Drake. Keep a curb on thy doings an ye would win to sea with fresh water and provision. When ye hath drunk yerselves to staggering, come ye aboard the *Fearless*, molesting none."

With a curt nod to Butshead, Barbary turned and walked out of the *posada*. That he was right in his surmise of the danger in which the comparatively small company of the *Fearless* stood, was apparent

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as he and Dickon returned to the beach and the skiff. They were followed by a group of scowling natives.

At the boat they were so close on the heels of the retreating pair that Barbary turned, while Butshead pushed off the skiff, and faced their leader. He was a small man, not undistinguished in appearance and dress. He stepped out from the group and bowed politely.

"*Señor el Capitan*," said he quietly. "I wish you and your company no harm, but Fuerte Ventura in times past hath suffered much at the hands of the English adventurers. Thy company is small—mark me, *Señor el Capitan*. I wish you no ill—but it may be that my people may not share my desire that you depart—in peace."

"An I take your meaning, *Señor Alcalde*—if such ye be," said Barbary with a polish that suggested a man who had known better circumstances, "let me remind ye that, an ill should befall my company, Sir Walter Raleigh, of whom ye may have memory and who follows our advance, may show a greater resentment against Fuerte Ventura."

"For that reason alone do I forbear to advise my people," said the *alcalde* sternly.

But a truce was effected when Barbary assured the official that he would do all in his power to clear the ship from the bay, the *alcalde* promising in return that he would facilitate that departure by all the means in his power, seeing particularly that water and provisions should be forthcoming as speedily as possible.

Then Butshead and Barbary returned aboard the *Fearless*. As the skiff neared the brigantine, Barbary suddenly leaned forward and grasped Dickon's knee with a convulsive clutch. His eyes were straining toward the poop of the brigantine, where a dark figure stood motionless against the stars and facing the far west.

"It's Taruma," said Butshead quietly.

Yet when they clambered aboard and through the semi-darkness of the deck the Indian came toward them in his jaguar skin, Barbary again clutched at Butshead and whispered with that same fearful quaver in his voice—

"Who—what is it?"

It was apparent that, after the stimulus of his encounter with the mutinous crew had passed, Barbary was again in a state bordering nervous collapse. As he walked to the cabin, Butshead and the Indian following, he cast furtive glances over his shoulder at the soft-footed Indian who followed without being bidden.

Within the cabin Barbary glared at Taruma, who came to a halt just inside the door and again looked at the ship's master with that keenness of eye Dickon had noticed before. It had a curious effect on Barbary. Suddenly he shouted—

"Why stare at me, thou blackamoor?"

For answer Taruma walked to the locker, on top of which was a bottle and a cup. He poured out a measure of the liquor and quietly offered it to Barbary, who stared in amazement, then waved the cup away.

"No!" he said, his under lip quivering nevertheless. "I ha' drunk enough, God help me. A curse upon the man who invented the —— poison!"

But Taruma still held the cup toward him and said with a quiet smile:

"Me know. Place inside sorry for *acarewana* (captain). But Taruma want for go home. Taruma must be medicine-man to *acarewana*. Taruma know. Take!"

Barbary understood, as did Butshead. Tears of nervous weakness and the ready emotion of after-intoxication welled into the captain's eyes. With a hand that was almost palsied, so it shook, he took the cup of liquor, drank it and sat down for a moment, as one in deep thought, on the locker. Butshead and Taruma watched him, the former with curiosity, the Indian with confident expectation. Presently Barbary looked up. A faint flush had come to his cheeks, his under lip was firm again and there was strength in the manner in which he stood up with a bracing of his shoulders.

He looked at Butshead for a few moments, then thoughtfully at Taruma's softly smiling face. He spoke to Butshead, his words being but half understood by Taruma.

"Boy," said he, "I ha' been a fool, but no more. I am captain of the *Fearless* from this night. See that this dark-skinned lad attend us aft here in the cabin. As for thee, Butshead, thou hast been my friend this night. For the rest, thou art my mate!"

He held out his hand. Butshead took it with an uneasy thing troubling his own heart. He suspected that Barbary cared

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nothing for the right or wrong of the expedition. He was a sea captain who had been "unfortunate"—now he knew why. Sober, he might be a fine man. It only hurt Butshead in that moment as he gripped Barbary's hand that secretly he, himself, should be playing two sides of the game. Yet Barbary might yet prove a stanch ally for the right.

For the greater part of the night Barbary paced restlessly up and down the poop-deck like a man pursued by a personal devil at his elbow. In the early hours of the morning the boats came alongside and for some time the ship was pandemonium as Gorges and his drunken crew tumbled aboard and before they settled down for the night. One man who, it was afterward confirmed, certainly was in one of the boats when it left the beach, as certainly never came aboard. Gorges, in his sober senses next morning, had a vague recollection of being hilariously amused at the spectacle of some man falling off the rope ladder, backward, into the sea. He did not remember making any effort to save him, so wisely said nothing about what he only hazily recalled.

When the ship quieted down, Butshead turned in. For a while Barbary continued to pace the deck. Taruma, now captain's boy, squatted by the cabin door, watching him. Exhaustion finally overcame the captain physically. Barbary entered the cabin, half-stripped and stretched himself out on the locker and tried to sleep.

An hour later he sat up with a deep sigh. With shaking hands he lighted an oil lamp. In a sitting posture he covered his face with his hands and groaned in an agony of body and mind. His whole being shrieked for its accustomed stimulant. Barbary uncovered his face with a start as a voice spoke softly at his elbow. There was Taruma on one knee, his right hand offering a cup half-filled with liquor.

"*Acarewana* no sleep?" said he. "Take."

"No—no!" groaned Barbary, suddenly withdrawing the hand that had almost feverishly clutched the cup. "Take it away. I'm done wi' 't!"

"Taruma know," said the Indian insistently. "Take!"

Barbary stared at him, muttered something, drank the liquor and lay down again. Presently he fell into a gentle sleep. Taruma watched him for a while, then blew out the lamp, curled up on the bare planking with his knees drawn up under the jaguar skin, and himself slept.

Till long after sunrise the *Fearless* rode at anchor in the placid bay of Fuerte Ventura, not a soul stirring aboard her.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAINS AND COURSES

AT NOON when the company of the *Fearless* had awakened to find itself in that state which is excruciating sobriety, Captain Barbary and Gorges met in the cabin aft and came to an understanding on various matters.

A few hours of natural sleep, following that induced by Taruma's doctoring and succeeded by a solid meal, had worked wonders with Barbary. In fact, he was so like himself, so like the devil when he was well again, that he had all but forgotten that he was ever sick, or that a half savage in a jaguar skin had, by some crude understanding and craft of his own, guided him around a sharp, dark and very narrow turning. For the first time aboard the *Fearless* Barbary appeared as the man he might have been before he became "unfortunate"; cool, reserved, self-dependent, a law unto himself and the ship he commanded.

Gorges realized it and tactfully dismissed the affair of the previous night as belonging to a past chapter in which neither he nor Barbary figured to shining advantage. The only reminders of it were the bandage which the boatswain wore around his head and the law which Barbary succinctly laid down as to the future conduct of the ship's company.

They were upon the quest of a fortune in gold. Barbary had Gorges to thank for his command, but if Gorges proposed to run the ship and set the crew the example of conduct it would be better if Barbary put ashore now and trusted to luck for a return to England. Gorges instantly became humble at this alternative. He could not dispense with Barbary while over two thousand leagues of sea remained to be navigated.

Barbary also related his encounter with the *alcalde* and pointed out what might happen if the *Fearless* did not clear on short notice and the crew again broke loose.

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Gorges, in that morning-after sobriety which sees grave possibilities in close perspective, promptly agreed on reform and speedy departure, the more readily as, through forethought in supplying the ship, there would be no utter deprivation of liquor once the vessel was at sea.

The outcome of the interview restored Barbary's self-respect still further. All seemed to be going well. Presently he was even laughing with his boatswain over the latter's cracked head. Gorges grinned sheepishly but seemed to have forgiven Butshead. After all, what was a tap on the skull from an outraged mate, or collision with a bottle in a drunken orgy? And that led Barbary and the boatswain to a discussion of young Butshead and the Indian, Taruma.

Barbary had developed the utmost faith in both of them, and said so without giving his reasons. He further announced his intention of requiring that the mate's position aboard the *Fearless* be respected to the last degree and that Taruma thereafter should have no dealings forward, but have sole charge of the officers' comfort aft.

"Aye, aye," said Gorges, narrowing his eyes. "It may be well, Barbary, that ye keep them both under yer own eye. Mind ye, I ha' no suspicion of either. The lad is right smart and quick in the up-take, and the blackamoor may prove a right good weapon an the natives turn agin us. But bear ye this in mind, Barbary. This same young Butshead, as was cabin-boy to Raleigh an' favored o' him, turned right sudden, an' this blackamoor was shadow to Raleigh in London. It may be his hunger for Guiana and his own blood were greater than his love o' the coxcomb, but 'twere no harm, Barbary, to keep an eye on both of them and as they bear to one another."

Barbary shook his head.

"Thou huntest a mare's nest. The blackamoor is a harmless soul. As for the mate, he serves his uncle, which in the end is his own inheritance. He hath the knowledge of Martinez' course and he is our golden goose."

"Aye, but he carries not the written word," growled Gorges.

"And there lies to me proof he hath serious purpose in this venture," said Barbary, rising with a laugh. "Deal gently with the golden goose, Gorges, an thou be wise."

Presently Gorges blew his whistle and the crew, red-eyed but sober, assembled. Barbary from the poop talked to them after the contemptuous manner of sea-masters. He would trice up by the thumbs the first man whose hearing was so dull that he needed repetition of the slightest command. Then the crew, led by Gorges himself, gave three hearty cheers for Barbary and tumbled over into the boats at the order.

They returned to the *Fearless* in an hour, the boats laden with provisions, and Barbary noted that they hoisted them aboard with a right cheery willingness. Apparently they had left the liquor alone this trip. Two hours later they again returned, still sober, whereat Barbary relaxed his vigilance. As the crew went ashore a third time for further fresh provisions against the long leg of the outward voyage, he retired to the cabin and lay down on the locker.

Half an hour later he was up again. Unaware that the dark eyes of Taruma watched him keenly through a little window, Barbary paced up and down, persistently wringing his hands, hitching his shoulders and sighing. Once or twice he opened a little cabinet in the wall and searched among the numerous small bottles stored there, as if seeking among the ship's medical supplies something that would alleviate his highstrung nerves. He found nothing that he thought would be likely to do him good. Presently, in desperation, he raised the lid of the locker, seeking the black bottle he had resolutely placed there. It was gone!

He straightened up, his fists clenched and his face working with fury. In that moment the desire for liquor was irresistible, merely because the choice of indulging or refraining was no longer a matter of his own choice. He seemed to be about to dash out and, seizing upon Taruma or Butshead, demand an explanation of the missing bottle, when pride—that saving grace of a man who has not forgotten what he once was—came to the rescue. He lifted his chin in the air and stood still for a minute. Presently, with a deep sigh, he resumed his restless pacing of the cabin. It was then that Taruma's dark eyes ceased to watch from the window.

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Five minutes later the Indian opened the cabin door and appeared before Barbary with the half-filled cup in his hand and the one word—

"Take!"

But pride can be as destructive as it is saving. In the past five minutes Barbary had won a moral victory over himself; yet here was the fiend in the flesh of a savage blackamoor standing, smiling, with an outstretched hand offering the very thing for which every nerve in his body shrieked.

"God A'mighty!" he roared, his face dark with passion. "What meanest thou by this, thou black dog? No! No—by——!"

"*Acarewana* must have. Taruma know. Same way Taruma own people do. You take!" said the Indian with quiet, smiling determination.

Butshead had heard the captain's fervid outburst and appeared in the open door just as Barbary weakened and his hand, shaking like a leaf, reached out for the poison his soul abhorred while his body craved it.

Instantly Butshead, young in experience, darted forward, struck the cup from Taruma's hand and turned upon the Indian in blazing wrath. He seized the Prince of Aromaia by the shoulder and hurled him crashing against the bulkhead.

"Thou fool!" he snarled, irrespective of the captain's presence.

Taruma got up dazedly and stared with utter reproach at the youth he had considered his understanding friend. There was no misunderstanding the anger in Butshead's eyes. The Indian adjusted the jaguar skin which had all but slipped from his body, shrugged his shoulders in a resigned way and left the cabin, shaking his head sorrowfully.

Butshead, without a glance at Barbary and affording no opportunity for discussion of the incident, also walked out. Barbary was standing where he had been when Taruma offered the cup. The spirituous odor of the spilled liquor came to his nostrils. His fists were clenched and beads of sweat gathered upon his brow. For several minutes he stood there, suffering the agonies of Tantalus. The return of the boats with more provisions presently came to his rescue with a challenge to his captaincy.

THE last trip was made after dusk. The crew brought as much water in kegs as the boats could carry. Possibly Gorges understood the processes of Barbary's psychology, for not a man of his company appeared under the influence of liquor.

All was well. All was ready. Gorges looked toward the poop-deck and gave the word. Barbary ordered the anchor weighed and sail set. The land breeze had set in and in less than an hour the *Fearless* was standing out to sea. Late in the night she cleared the islands and her course was set due southwest before the trade breeze which ordinarily would remain steady.

Butshead felt a load lifted from his mind. Everything now favored a swift passage to Trinidad. The breeze was right. The crew was docile, willing and sober. Barbary was apparently himself again, and somehow in the young mate's heart pity for the man gave way to a kind of admiration. The conduct of Taruma was something beyond him; but then he was a savage after all, and Butshead clearly recalled the drinking propensities of the *Orenoqueponi*. They were notorious drunkards, as Raleigh had discovered.

Whether it was that Taruma himself realized his error, or pride and resentment influenced him, he offered no more rum to the master he was now charged to serve. He carried Barbary's supper from the galley to the cabin. Half-way between the two he set down the dishes, hastened to his hammock and returned with the bottle he had taken from Barbary's locker. He was about to pour some of the liquor into the brew of coffee berries they had obtained at Fuerte Ventura, when—it was either pride or resentment—he again shrugged his shoulders, restopped the bottle and with a fierce mutter hurled it overboard. Then he took the unadulterated meal to the cabin.

Early on the following morning Butshead found Barbary, who had taken the deck at the first morning watch, leaning over the gunwale at the larboard quarter and studying the by-rushing seas. The *Fearless* was speeding southwest with all sail set, under a cloudless, wind-swept sky into which the sun was climbing, a brilliant ball.

At Butshead's approach Barbary looked up and gave him a cheerful greeting. His eyes were bright and about his mouth there

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was a smile of the utmost content. He gazed aloft at the canvas, which was bellying and muttering, swept the landless horizon with his eye and waved an arm toward the singing, fast-following wind.

"That's music for a mariner's ear!" said he, his face strangely radiant.

"Aye, aye, sir," said Butshead, and he took command while Barbary went to the cabin and was served a hearty breakfast by Taruma, Prince of Aromaia.

To the Indian, also, the master seemed in the best of humor, but the fact failed to dispel a certain gloom which had settled upon Taruma himself. He served his master with a sullenness that Barbary quite failed to note.

At noon Barbary and his mate made separate observations, after Butshead had received some instruction. Thereafter they retired to the cabin and separately worked out the reckoning. The amateur navigator's results differed widely from the captain's, but Barbary laughed, showed him where he erred and, after marking the position for that day on the chart, bade his junior work it out all over again and keep on working it until their positions agreed.

Butshead succeeded in getting it right after two hours' work, and brought his results to Barbary, whom he found humming an old English air as he leaned by the gunwale, contentedly watching the men at work in the waist. They were cleaning up ship. He paid little attention to Dick's workings, save that he said they were correct, then suddenly laughed and said—

" 'Tis a good augury, lad, when the men sing so lustily."

Butshead looked up, puzzled. He listened for a moment. The men were not singing. He glanced at Barbary. His face was alight, and there was no doubt that whatever ailed him he was happy—quietly happy. His eyes were soft. He was smiling and, as if following the tune he imagined the crew forward were singing, he hummed softly, moving his head gently from side to side in time to the measure.

Presently he stooped and glanced up at the bellying sails and the whining rigging. He knitted his brows, then turned his head slightly, as if listening to the sea.

"The sea, too," he whispered softly. "Heard thou ever music like that? Ah, lad, 'tis the happy world! Please God, I will never drink again."

Butshead retired, puzzled. Later Taruma caught his eye and beckoned him under the break of the poop. There was a curious light in the Indian's eyes, half regret, half triumph.

"Barasai," said he softly. "*Acarewana* go wrong inside place." He tapped his head. "Taruma try stop—try keep off devils. You no let."

Butshead stared, aghast. There was no mistaking Taruma's meaning or, now, the captain's sudden delusion about the choral effects of the sails, the wind, the sea and the singing crew. He wished to accuse the Indian of having done nothing to prevent it, but other things—the fear that the navigation of the ship might depend upon him, the possibility of a staggering responsibility devolving upon his inexperience—left him merely staring. Taruma read that other thought and answered the unuttered accusation.

"Taruma know. Taruma try save. Taruma people drink much, but no often have devils. Know how keep away. But *acarewana* no have bad devils. He have happy kind, make he sing. Taruma no can keep away now. Too late; butTaruma make *acarewana* get well maybe soon time if Barasai no knock thing away."

Butshead, still dazed by this—to him—unexpected development, continued to stare for several minutes. He began to realize that he knew nothing of such matters. When he struck the liquor from Taruma's hand he had done so only because he thought the Indian was giving Barbary more of the poison that had been the sole trouble aboard since the *Fearless* left Plymouth. However, the mischief was done, whoever was to blame—he, Taruma, or—as was strictly true—Barbary himself. Butshead turned helplessly upon the Indian.

"For God's sake, do what thou sayest thou can, Taruma. I'll mind my own affairs, the which, I'm thinking, will be care enough."

"*Acarewana* he going be very sick," said Taruma mysteriously, but Butshead did not hear him.

The mate had turned away, ascended the ladder and gone to the cabin. From within it came a rich baritone voice—and yet it was unmistakably Barbary who was singing—uplifted in unrhymed, unrhythmed

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fragments of song that yet had a more or less connected meaning. It was as if some poetic spring in the man had found vent to pour forth.

"Oh, I am the soul of my ship!
The sea is my bride,
Our love is the deep, deep sea.
Ho, ye full-breasted waves!
Ye swell like my heart!"

THE voice continued, touched with a mere suggestion of madness; but Butshead had heard enough. He descended the ladder and went aft to where Gorges was seated in quiet talk with the men, who were idling in the late afternoon sun. He beckoned him aside.

"Gorges," said Butshead with extreme seriousness. "The captain's got—" he knew that "horrors" was the word; but it was far from descriptive of the captain's curious happiness—"he's gone mad."

Gorges grinned.

"I was expectin' of that," said he coolly.

But all at once the grin died out of his face and a look of bitter chagrin succeeded it. The situation dawned on him as the possibility had occurred to Butshead. The navigation of the ship, at least, until Barbary recovered—if he ever did—depended upon this twenty-year-old lad. Butshead read the meaning of that look on Gorges' face.

"Thou hadst best put back to Fuerte," said he.

That awoke Gorges to all that a return meant. He struck his clenched fist into his left palm.

"No, by heaven!" he suddenly hissed through locked jaws. "There will be no turning back for all the blue devils out of hell. Thinkest thou I'll go back to England empty-handed, now we ha' the ship and provisions, powder, shot and rum? No, by Harry! We ha' the wind and the sun an' we be a poor lot o' mariners if we fail to hold a course by dead reckoning till such time as he hath his wits again. Besides, thou hast some knowledge o' sun-craft thyself, lad.

"No, by Harry! Steady as she goes, say I! We'll make land somewhere as did the Italian, an' happen it be not nigh to our goal, we ha' the ship and all that's in her, which I choose against scurvy England an' a pauper's fare!"

That was Gorges' stand in the matter. Indeed, the adventure in its new phase seemed to appeal to him, to judge by the animation of his present talk with Scroop, Tarry and the others. Butshead retired to the cabin, where he found the captain smilingly engaged in the task of writing what he said was poetry. In strange contrast with his crazy content was the lad who presently sat on the locker with his head in his hands.

The *Fearless* was but one day out from the Canaries. Between her present position and Trinidad there lay two thousand leagues of open sea. Despite Gorges' craft as a practical seaman and Butshead's own little haphazard knowledge of striking a position, the chances of making a landfall within measurable distance of Trinidad or Guiana were about equal to those of finding a needle dropped in the sea.

His suggestion to Gorges that the *Fearless* put back into Fuerte had been prompted not only by common sense but a hope that here at the outset the quietus had been put upon the attempt to steal from Raleigh the first fruits of the gold mine he had discovered. So far as Butshead was concerned, he was now in an unenviable position if Gorges pursued his threatened course—an unwilling guest aboard a stolen ship, his original object in coming aboard defeated. And Taruma? Poor simple Taruma. The Prince of Aromaia might never see his native land again, but find himself kicked about for years aboard nothing more or less than a pirate ship.

But if he could put back, despite Gorges? Gorges could not be awake night and day. Besides he had, as yet, no real reason to suspect that Butshead was not heart and soul in the venture which promised him and his uncle a share of the gold of El Dorado, even if they failed to re-discover Raleigh's mine. Surely among the company aft there was still one head with a grain of common sense left in it, one man who realized the insanity of venturing further out to sea without a competent navigator.

There was—more than one man. The company was divided and engaged in a mighty argument to which heat was presently lent by the broaching of a few casks of Spanish wine brought aboard at Fuerte Ventura. Butshead easily learned that one of the most strenuous opposers

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of Gorges' plan, at least so long as the captain remained incapable, was a long-headed Scotch sailor named Fergus. Fergus' head may have been further lengthened by the scene of carousal aboard the *Fearless* that night. As the soberest man of the crew he was sent by Gorges to the wheel at midnight. And there Butshead found and talked to his man.

"The wind serves good for the Cape Verde Islands to the south," said Butshead, quite as if he issued orders and did not expect his authority to be questioned. "Due south, and steady at that!"

Fergus studied the young mate for a moment, then jerked his head forward.

"He'll ken we ha' changed the course when sun rises," said he.

"So be it," said Butshead. "Obey orders and let consequence be mine."

With a grunt that might have meant satisfaction or dissatisfaction, Fergus turned the wheel with a hand over hand motion. It did not seem as if the ship moved, only that the breeze struck more obliquely upon the quarter, and the sails swayed slightly while the stars drifted a bit to the west and again became still.

TO BE CONTINUED

CHIEF WASHAKIE AND PRESIDENT GRANT

by E. A. BRININSTOOL

DURING the great Sioux campaign of 1876, many Indian allies were used by General George Crook. Among others was Chief Washakie of the Shoshones, ever the firm friend of the white men.

A few years prior to the great chief's death, he made a trip to Washington, and was profoundly impressed all along the route with the magnitude of the country and the swarming millions of white men. He visited President Grant at the White House, and the President was so impressed by Washakie's personality that after the chief's return to his reservation in Wyoming, it was determined to send him a present.

It was finally decided to send Washakie a saddle, and President Grant ordered that no expense be spared in making the most beautiful creation possible of the saddlers' art.

In due time the saddle was finished and sent to Fort Washakie, Wyoming. The President sent a letter to the colonel commanding the garrison, suggesting that the presentation be made a public affair.

On the day appointed, the Shoshones turned out in full force and regalia. The colonel then had the saddle displayed where all could see it, and the Indians were profuse in their expressions of pleasure, while Chief Washakie was moved deeply when the commanding officer mentioned the fact that the Great Father at Washington was not unmindful of the fact that the Shoshones had rendered valuable services to the Government in turbulent times; that the chief had never made war against the whites; that he was a Christian Indian and a believer in the "white man's road," and that the saddle was sent as a testimonial of the great affection in which Washakie was held by the President of the United States.

The chief's emotions were visible, and when the colonel asked if Washakie had not some word of acknowledgment to send the Great Father, the Indian hesitated, then replied:

"Colonel, I can say nothing. My heart is so full that my tongue refuses to work."

"Oh, but you must say a few words, Chief," earnestly exclaimed the commandant. "Just a few brief expressions in order that the Great Father may know how much you value his beautiful gift."

The old man controlled himself with difficulty. Then he said in a most impressive manner:

"Colonel, it is hard for an Indian to say 'thank you' like a white man. When you do a kindness for a white man the white man feels it in his head, and his tongue talks; but when you do a kindness for a red man the red man feels it in his heart. The heart has no tongue."

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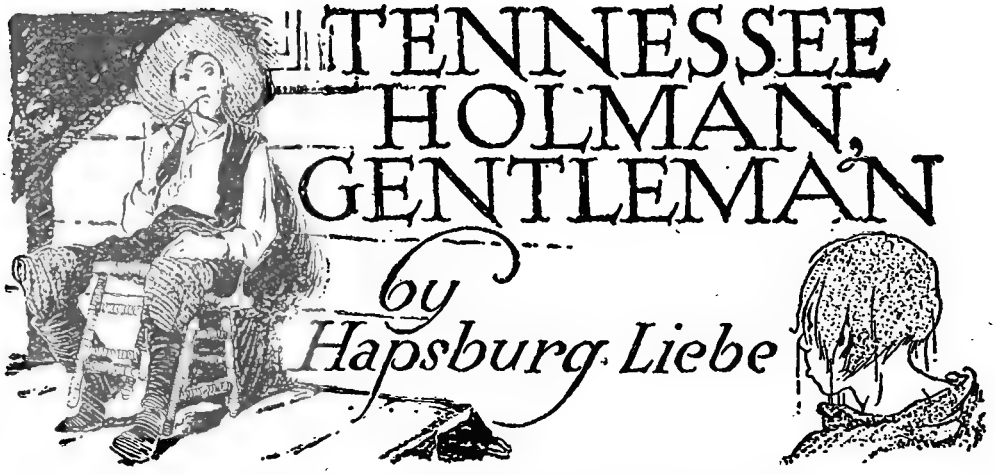

TENNESSEE HOLMAN, GENTLEMAN

by Hapsburg Liebe

Author of "Bingo," "The Rabbit in the Bresh-Pile," etc.

WHEN mountaineer Porter Hanley died in his boots, he left his motherless nine-year-old son a rifle and a fiddle, sixty cents in cash, a foolish given name to carry through life, and a fiery disposition; and yet, the name, being Boss, did seem to fit pretty well sometimes.

Boss spent the sixty cents for red-striped candy at the near-by logging-camp's commissary, swapped the rifle and the fiddle for a jew's-harp and three dollars and spent this money too for commissary candy, survived a long and bitter siege of aching somewhere in his narrow equatorial regions, and then became a jack-in-a-box fixture at the logging-camp for two years.

At the end of this time, the wanderlust bee began to sing under his battered straw hat, and within the next two years he lived by his wits in half a dozen other camps. In the sixth of these he proved himself proficient at waiting on the timberjack-lined dining-table, perfected himself in the art of talking slang, and picked up a brownish-yellow cur named Rush.

At the advanced age of fourteen, Boss Hanley was holding forth as boarding-house roustabout at the "Old King Cole" camp on Crooked Creek, and he still had Rush and Rush's unfailing affection. He had never liked Superintendent Bill Cole especially; but Cole kept a good table, and Boss hadn't been able to depart from it. Furthermore, Cole saw that he was at least half-way decently clothed from the company's commissary, and the cooky was friend enough to Rush to see that the dog had something to eat three times each day. Besides—and this is not the smallest reason why Boss Hanley stayed on at the Old King Cole—there was Holman. Boss loved Holman quite as much as Rush loved Boss, but hardly so slavishly.

"Tennessee" Holman had been so nicknamed because he seemed always to think his home State, a border of which lay along the crest of the western mountain, was the only real State in the Union. This was neither ignorance nor narrowness in him, in any worthwhile sense; Holman had been to the Philippines as a soldier, and it had been an education to him. The man held his country highly, and his country was Tennessee.

There too was McBrey, once a professional pugilist and now undisputed champion of timberjack fighters, who had a good cause of his own for burying his burnished and shining talent in the back o' beyond of the Smokies. One of the keenest delights of little Hanley's existence was in his thrice cordial hatred of McBrey, who himself had begun it by fastening the tips of Rush's ears over the top of his head by means of a commissary safety-pin. Thus McBrey had become the boy's natural enemy, and no Hanley had ever run from an enemy, natural or otherwise. Now the Hanleys had a pride all their own.

It was on Sunday afternoon, and all the loggers except the Tennesseean were at their usual Sunday afternoon horseplay in the two-acre camp clearing. Holman sat on the

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boarding-house porch; his thoughts were about equally divided between Nan Henderson and better logging methods.

Suddenly there came from the creek a shrill and boyish cry, then a splash, then a burst of laughter from a score of throats; but Tennessee stuck religiously to his mental pictures of Nan and overhead skidder cables, and took no notice of the uproar. A minute later, however, a small wet hand was shaking his arm, while a high-pitched voice was calling over and over into his ear:

"Tennessee! Tennessee! Are ye deef?"

Holman came to and turned his gaze upon Boss Hanley. From head to foot, Boss was dripping wet, and his sunburned and freckled face was ashen with quick, hot anger.

"What's the matter, son?" Holman drawled soberly.

"Blaster soused me in the creek all over, and I want you to trim him for a-doin' it, Tennessee!" stormed the boy, in his broad, flat dialect. He went on narrowly, "And you ain't no gen'ulman ef ye don't!"

Holman frowned. He had been careful to keep clear of "Blaster" McBrey, being dreamer and worker rather than fighting-man —though he could fight when he wanted to.

"Did your mouth git you into it, son?"

"I never cheeped a cheep!" ripped out Boss; and Boss never lied.

Plainly, Tennessee was at a loss to know just what to do. To object to the bully's harsh treatment of the boy was to fight the bully; and to fight the bully was to carry a whipping, which after a fashion is dishonor, according to the code of the Southern mountains logging country.

"Well, it's Summertime," he muttered finally, "and a duckin' ain't goin' to hurt you none. Stay 'way from McBrey, Boss."

Little Hanley straightened to such an extent that he seemed to be almost leaning over backward. Tennessee, his god, had failed him! Then he sneered with studied deliberation, turned with the brownish-yellow cur at his bare heels, ran down the steps and snatched up two stones the size of an egg, and hurried toward the group of loggers.

Holman rose with a flash in his clear topaz eyes. He saw Boss halt within twenty feet of Blaster McBrey, draw back an arm and loose one of the two stones just as the bully turned his face toward him; and Boss did not miss.

McBrey staggered as the stone struck him squarely in the forehead; he put up a hand and brought down red on his finger-tips, and staggered again. In another second, he had started for the boy, and Boss threw back a hand to let fly the other stone.

"Stop, Blaster," he cried, "stop!"

McBrey stopped. Tennessee Holman ran toward them. They were standing there glaring at each other, the lad and the bully, when Holman reached them.

"If you put a finger's weight on that boy, Blaster," Tennessee said evenly, touching McBrey lightly on the shoulder, "you'll have to whip me. You got my word for that, Blaster." And he fully expected to fight when he said it.

McBrey wheeled his great body half-way around and faced Holman.

"Whipping you will be easy!" he growled, biting off the words with hateful distinctness.

"Maybe so," smiled the quiet Holman. "And again, maybe it won't be as dead easy as you seem to think. But anyhow, you'll have to whip me. You've picked at Boss all along, and he's tired of it. I'm tired of it, too. Get me?"

It was in the nature of a challenge, and the onlooking timberjacks stared at him surprizedly. To them, McBrey represented the undefeatable, the invincible. The bully did not take up the gauntlet, a thing they put down to his having just been hurt. Their conclusion might, or might not, have been correct.

That was the beginning of it. Then, too, there was the girl—a girl that even gruff old Bill Cole himself would have married on a moment's notice.

McBrey went to the creek to wash his now red-streaked face. Holman looked straight at the boy, jerked his head around until his chin pointed toward the boarding-house, and ambled off down the stream.

But Boss didn't go to the boarding-house. Instead, he stole after Tennessee. Tennessee entered the woods, found a winding and laurel-lined trail that led to the home of Nan Henderson, and followed it without knowing that the boy Boss and Rush the dog were behind him.

NAN lived in a big white frame house. Her father was a mountaineer aristocrat; he owned cattle on a dozen hills, timber-lands, a farm and a

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mica-mine, and he had given his children a measure of education. Holman halted at the gate and hallooed, and Boss stopped in the shade of an apple-tree not far off and sat down with Rush beside him.

Nan herself came in answer to Tennessee's call. She wore her hair up, and she wore shoes and stockings, and her dress was not merely a one-piece affair of seven-cents-per-yard calico. She was tall and round-figured, brown-eyed and brown-haired, a smiling delight of a girl; that the Old King Cole timberjacks worshiped her both individually and collectively was nothing to cause wonderment.

As she reached the other side of the gate, Holman greeted her with a solemnity that was almost funny to Boss. She invited Tennessee in, but he flatly refused to go. Little Hanley, unmindful of the fact that it was a deliberate and therefore disgraceful attempt at eavesdropping, bent forward in the hope that he might hear what it was they were saying; but they spoke in low voices, and he caught only the drift of it.

Three minutes later, Boss saw Nan draw herself up even straighter, take a plain gold ring from her engagement finger and drop it into Holman's reluctant palm; then he saw Holman lift his broad-brimmed hat, turn and come toward him, and Holman was almost as white as chalk, while Nan stood looking after him a little sadly.

Tennessee passed the boy and the dog without seeing either of them. When he had gone out of sight around a bend in the path, Boss rose and hastened to Nan at the gate, and he was about as angry as he ever got.

"You," he said with a contemptuous twist to his youthful lips, "you're a dang purty thing, now, hain't ye! W'y, Tennessee's a gen'ulman, Nan!"

Nan turned her gaze full upon him, but she didn't speak. The lad went on, in bitter arraignment of her—

"You throwed him over for Blaster McBrey!"

"No," said Nan, with a calmness of manner that was striking, "he throwed himself over for Blaster McBrey."

"Aw, you hursh!" in the keenest of sarcasm. He seized her sleeve and gave it a jerk. "How so?"

"Maybe you wouldn't understand, Boss. You—you like Tennessee, don't you?"

"Yeuh. I shore do. You ought 'o like him, too, Nan. The' never was a better feller ever kicked the face o' the earth with two feet, Nan," very seriously.

At that, the young woman bent over the gate toward the lad.

"I do like him, Boss," she said. "I do like him."

She went into the house. Old John Henderson came strolling across the flower-filled yard with two foxhounds on either side of him. Little Hanley greeted him sourly, almost impudently:

"Hi, John. John," he continued, "you've got one idjit in the fambly."

"Idjit?" echoed Henderson, with a tug at his beard. "How come that?"

"Ax Nan," clipped Boss, turning to his dog. "Hyuh, Rush. Le's go. Hyuh, Rush—hyuh!"

Old John chuckled wonderingly as the boy and his four-footed friend disappeared in the near-by woods. But he didn't ask Nan.

Boss Hanley spent the remainder of that Sunday afternoon in searching for Holman, and at sundown he came upon him sitting disconsolately beside Crooked Creek; Holman was idly stripping the leaves from one fern after another. Boss walked up and sat down beside him, and slapped him on the shoulder in quite a grown-up way.

"It's a devil of a note, Tennessee, hain't it?" he muttered in sympathy.

"What?"

"Her a handin' you the goo'-by for that low-down Blaster, that's what."

"How do you know?"

"She jest as good as told me, Tennessee. I got a little talk for you."

"Out with it, son."

After a great deal of careful and diplomatic questioning and comment, Boss came to the heart of the difficulty. McBrey of the cities had called several times to see Nan and Nan had found him different and therefore interesting, also subtly flattering; Blaster could be as smooth as oil, when he wished to be.

Believing that he was not fit company for her—and he wasn't—Tennessee had objected, and he had done it just a little too spiritedly. Piqued, he had demanded that Nan choose between them; and Nan, also piqued, had chosen. You know how women are when a premature streak of ownership crops out in their fiancés. It is quite the prettiest form of contrariness on earth, but contrariness just the same.

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"Take my edvice, Tennessee," said Boss, finally; "you go straight to Nan, and—uh, give her a spankin'—uh, a spankin'——"

"What you talkin' about, kid?" exploded Holman.

"Give her a spankin' good talk, 'at's what I'm a talkin' about!" flared Boss. "Tell her what's what, and tell her what sort o' polecat Blaster is!"

"Rot!" sneered Holman. "Wimmen's some talkers theirselves. Besides, I don't talk about no man to his back. Let's go to camp, son."

Night had fallen when they reached the boarding-house. Lamps had been lighted in the passageway on the lower floor, and in the big up-stairs sleeping-quarters of the timberjacks. Midway of the rough staircase, they met Blaster McBrey in a somewhat rumpled tan suit; he wore a spray of honeysuckle in his lapel buttonhole, a gorgeous horseshoe pin in his flaming red tie, and a patch of adhesive plaster on his forehead.

When McBrey had been swallowed up in the mountain night, the lad caught his companion's arm and halted him.

"He's a goin' to see Nan," whispered Boss. "S'posin' I foller him and listen, and hear what they say; humph?"

The Tennesseean's face had been a little gray under its rich coat of sunburn. Now it went a little pink.

"If you do," he said in tones of iron, "I'll thrash you. Git me, Boss? If you do, I'll thrash you. I'm through with 'em both. And purty soon I'll be through with this loggin' outfit, too; I'm goin' back to Cyarter County, Tennessee, the gyarden-spot o' the world."

"Aw, you hursh! You're jest mad," grinned little Hanley.

"Maybe so," Holman replied. "All the same, I'm through with 'em both; and if you try eavesdroppin' 'em for me, I'll thrash you."

The boy's wide grin faded out almost as slowly as a sunset, and the look that followed was much like the darkness that comes afterward.

"Ye'll shore haf to do it, Tennessee," he said with his teeth shut.

With that Boss gathered Rush into his arms, ran down the stairs and plunged into the night. Tennessee Holman shrugged his shoulders in an I-don't-care-what-happens sort of fashion, and went on; he stopped at one of the camp's thirty narrow beds, and sat down gloomily.

BOSS shut Rush in the smith's shop, and trailed after Blaster McBrey as silently as a marauding wildcat.

At old John Henderson's gate, McBrey hallooed, not because it was the custom in the hills, but because he feared old John Henderson's foxhounds. The Hanley boy stole up close to him, listened and watched. He saw a light appear in the parlor of the Henderson home; then the front door opened, and one of Nan's flapper sisters came out; she invited McBrey in, scolded the hounds away, and ran away herself. McBrey entered the yard and shut the gate behind him, and Boss crept over the fence. A few minutes later, Boss hid himself soundlessly among the rioting honeysuckle vines that grew before an open parlor window, and peered in.

A big oil lamp set on a high mantel of carved black walnut. There was an uncomfortable plush sofa, and even more uncomfortable plush chairs. In the center of the room stood a small table loaded with artificial flowers and other such useless things. Blaster McBrey had dropped his heavy figure into a platform rocker, and Nan sat a nice little distance from him. Nan was pink and charming, but she seemed decidedly ill at ease.

"I think I must look odd with this patch on my forehead," the burly caller began—and the eavesdropper could have yelled from sheer delight.

"Ye-es," Nan agreed absently.

"A—an accident, and it doesn't amount to much," McBrey pursued. "Luckily, Cole had some adhesive plaster."

"Ye-es," said Nan, absently as before.

Boss sniffed to himself, and Blaster continued in his smoothest manner:

"Honest, Nan, you're wasting yourself back here in this jungle. It's a tragedy. Out in the world you'd be admired and appreciated. Aren't you a little tired of being miles from anything that's worth while?"

"Ye-es," the girl drawled, speaking as one who speaks in his sleep.

Boss clicked his teeth. McBrey went on:

"I'm going to Chicago inside of a year. I wonder if there's any use in my asking you to marry me?"

"Ye-es," said Nan.

The jaw muscles of little Hanley stood out in tiny ridges. McBrey's countenance pictured triumph and delight; he bent forward eagerly.

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"Do you really mean it?"

He rose and stepped toward her. She seemed not to see him. But when he took up one of her hands, she sprang to her feet and flung herself from him. Boss pressed closer against the vines, and he could see the old, old Henderson anger in her leaf-brown eyes; it was an anger that more than one person had learned to fear.

"What—what was that for?" she demanded in a voice that was bleak.

"Nothing, nothing at all," Blaster hastened to say apologetically.

Now McBrey was by no means all fool. He saw that the girl was distraught; that she had not even heard his rather indirect proposal of marriage; and that it was no time to press his suit. He picked up his hat and faced her again.

"Maybe I'd better go, Nan," he said with a poor smile—and Boss Hanley whispered to himself—

"You bet ye'd better go!"

He started, but Nan called to him and asked him to wait. He waited on the porch. Nan snatched paper and envelop, pen and ink from the high mantel, and hastily wrote a note in a single line; she sealed the envelop, addressed it, then carried it to McBrey on the porch.

"Will you please take this to Tennessee Holman?" she asked; and the boy in the honeysuckle vines thought her voice sounded queer.

"Certainly. Be glad to do it. Good night!" purred McBrey.

He thrust the message into a coat pocket, and walked rapidly toward camp.

When he reached it, the eavesdropper was crowding the hindermost limits of his moonlight shadow. The boy had guessed well concerning the message—she wished to see Holman; it could mean nothing else. That, doubtless, meant happiness for his pal; so Boss entered the now crowded and noisy quarters of the loggers with a joyous smile spread over his sun-tanned face.

Boss knew that Blaster disliked Tennessee, of course, and he knew that Blaster was never straight if being crooked was of any advantage to him; and yet, he expected to see McBrey deliver the note to Holman, who still sat moodily on his narrow bed. But McBrey showed no signs of delivering the note. He coolly went to his own bed, sat down heavily, and began to remove his loud yellow shoes. Then it was that Boss hastened to Holman, bent over and tapped Holman on the knee.

"Listen," he whispered; and the haggard countenance that Tennessee lifted to his gaze almost frightened him. "Listen. I went, Tennessee, and I heard every word them two said——"

Holman interrupted. Not with his voice, but with his hands, both hands. He seized the slender body of little Hanley and drew it struggling across his knee, face downward, and—well, Tennessee Holman kept his word as he had always kept his word, while all the other timberjacks save McBrey stared in wonderment.

McBrey only laughed. And it was a laugh that was not particularly pleasant to the ear.

When it was over, Boss Hanley had made no outcry. Neither had he uttered a word of anger or protest when it was over. Not a tear had come to his eyes, though they were as bright as new gold money. The fatherly punishment had been ordinarily severe, too. Now he stood there and stared straight at Holman, and the faces of both were whitish.

It was the man who looked downward first. As though with a duty finished, the boy very quietly walked over to his bed, stretched himself upon it without having removed a thread of his clothing, and so far as anybody knew went to sleep immediately.

The lights were extinguished shortly afterward. A still hour went by. Then Tennessee Holman rose and stole over to the boy's bed and knelt there, his heart bitter with poignant regret.

"Son," he whispered thickly, "are you awake?"

The lad turned his face the other way, and no answer came from him. One of Holman's hands slipped across the pillow, found a small wet spot and rested there unwillingly.

"Son," he whispered again, "are you awake?"

This time the boy spoke, and each word cut like a separate point of steel.

"When ye've jest got to fight, Tennessee," he said slowly and very distinctly, "better pick on somebody who is as big as you, and somebody who ain't a tryin' to do somepin' for ye. There's Blaster. Ye could git a rousin' good scrap out o' him, 'most any time. The truth is, Tennessee, ye're a dang coward. Jumpin' on a shaver like me! But I'll grow, Tennessee. Yeuh!

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You jest wait, ye dang coward; I'll lick ye, some day. You're no gen'ulman, Tennessee."

"I—I wanted to beg your pardon, son," Holman muttered brokenly.

"Aw, you hursh!" sneered Boss. "Go and tell it to the hoot-owls. You said ye was done with Nan and Blaster and this here loggin' outfit. Well, I'm done with you, too. Right now. Better take yeself away from here, or I'm li'ble to bust ye one in the forrard. And ye can say this much for yeself, Tennessee—you're the only livin' man 'at ever thrashed a Hanley!"

Holman winced. He went back to his bed; there was nothing else to do. And this most wretched of men slept little that night.

DAYS PASSED, and the silent and hard-working Tennessee Holman lingered on at the Old King Cole camp on Crooked Creek. Boss Hanley, still boiling with anger at that which he regarded as the last word in disgrace, kept to himself the matter of Nan's undelivered message.

"I'd see Tennessee dead afore I'd tell him," he would say now and then to Rush; "I'd see him dead first."

Nan, her overture made, satisfied that she had fully done her part toward a renewal of amicable relations with Holman, kept strictly at home. So deeply humiliated did she feel now, however, that she still permitted McBrey to call to see her occasionally—which would show Holman that she was not the person to grieve after any one mere man; and Blaster, of course, had not the slightest scruple about making the most of it in camp.

But McBrey soon saw that Nan was not herself any more, and he guessed the reason why; the note he hadn't given to the Tennesseean helped him to guess it. There was a barrier between him and the girl, and that barrier was Holman. Quite naturally for him, he proceeded to plan out a way of getting rid of his rival. This was not at all difficult for McBrey. He was cunning, and he knew that to prove a man a thief in a Southern mountain logging-camp was more than enough to cause the superintendent to discharge him. At that, Holman would leave in dishonor, with Nan lost to him for all time.

Came Sunday morning. Breakfast was over, and most of the loggers were at their rough play in the clearing. The man whom little Hanley thought he hated sat on a log near the edge of the woods; he was whittling red cedar; and thinking of a job with an outfit in Carter County, Tennessee, the garden-spot of the world. The man whom little Hanley really hated was in the superintendent's office; he was talking earnestly with Bill Cole. Little Hanley himself was sweeping out the sleeping-quarters of the men.

Steps sounded on the stairs. Boss turned, broom in hand, and saw Blaster McBrey and iron-gray old Bill Cole entering the big room. Cole frowned at him. McBrey eyed him curiously, nudged the superintendent, and jerked a thumb toward the stairway behind him.

"You're done up here, Boss," Cole said gruffly. "Go down and clean up my office."

The ordinary boy of fourteen, doubtless, would have suspected nothing. But Boss Hanley had lived by his wits too long to be an ordinary boy. As his bare feet carried him soundlessly down the steps, there flashed into his quick mind the suspicion that something was going on in the upstairs that Cole and the bully did not wish him to witness.

Therefore, having the average amount of human curiosity in his make-up, Boss tiptoed back to the head of the staircase and watched slyly.

Cole and McBrey were engaged in going through the pasteboard suitcases and canvas telescope-bags of the loggers, as though searching for some particularly important thing. One after another they opened, looked into and closed, working rapidly.

When Bill Cole had gone half-way through Holman's cheap telescope-bag, he rose and beckoned to McBrey.

"Here, Blaster," he said a low voice full of both surprise and regret, "is this it?"

McBrey hastened to him, and took a folding morocco-bound pocketbook from his hands.

"Sure!" said McBrey. "I'll tell you what's in it, and you can judge for yourself whether it's mine or not; I haven't seen in it since you found it, you know. There's a price list from a sporting-goods house in New York, a copy of Queensbury rules, two twenty-dollar gold pieces my mother gave me when I was a boy, a post-card addressed to me in Bondsville, and a horseshoe scarf-pin. Now, see for yourself!"

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Cole examined the contents of the pocketbook, and turned to McBrey with a hard, disappointed look on his seamed countenance. He had liked Holman, and to him a thief was not half so good as a murderer.

"It's all here," he said, "but—it's not easy for me to believe Holman's a thief, Blaster."

"It isn't easy for me to believe it, either," McBrey replied. "However, here's unquestionable evidence of his guilt. I guess I'll leave you now, Bill. I know loggers are scarce, and I hate to do it; but I won't work with a thief."

It was a subtle and telling shot, for the bully had succeeded in working himself high into the good graces of his superintendent. Craning his neck forward, Boss Hanley saw Bill Cole frown terribly, while his gray eyes glittered; he seemed very angry.

"You needn't go, Blaster," he growled. "I'll fire Holman for this. I won't have a thief in any camp of mine, Blaster."

"That's good of you, Bill," muttered McBrey, "and I won't forget it."

They started for the stairway. Boss scurried down the steps, and began to wield his broom in the superintendent's office. A moment later, Cole framed himself in the office doorway, while the heavy footfalls of McBrey told the boy that he had gone out to join the frolicking timberjacks in the clearing.

Without noticing little Hanley, the superintendent went to his scarred desk and sat down. He was badly upset now, and angrier than ever—Tennessee Holman, by far his best worker, a cheap thief! Then his gaze alighted on a country-line telephone intrument on the wall, and stuck there. Boss watched him closely. Soon he saw Cole go to his feet; Cole's eyes were still on the telephone instrument, and he seemed fairly puffing with rage.

One minute more, and Bill Cole was talking with the Bondsville sheriff. Indeed, Blaster McBrey's scheme was succeeding better than he knew.

"Get out here as quick as you can," snapped the high light of the Crooked Creek logging outfit. "I won't have a thief in my camp, and I'll make an example of him because he fooled me!"

But when he turned away, Cole seemed somehow sorry. He left the office without even glancing toward the roustabout boy.

His sweeping finished, Boss threw the broom aside and went to the porch, where he sat himself down on the floor and swung his legs over the edge. Tennessee Holman still whittled red cedar at the other side of the clearing, and Boss looked at him thoughtfully.

"He ain't no gen'ulman," whispered Boss to Rush, who sat beside him, "and I wouldn't tell him to save his life. Ef the sheriff gits him, the sheriff can have him, dang his hide. 'Cause he s-s-spanked me—and me a tryin' to do somepin' for him—me, a Hanley, and about the last one of 'em alll"

Bill Cole was as impulsive as a squirrel and as rough as a cliff, and often he was inclined toward driving his men instead of leading them; but in the last analysis he lived his life pretty close to the lines of the square. He spent a long hour in walking uneasily here and there about the camp, then he went straight across the clearing and halted before Holman.

"Tennessee," he began, "it's hard for me to believe you're a thief."

"I ain't a thief," Holman replied with cold, cold iron in his voice. "And I've got it in my head that I can wallop any man who says I am, even if it's you, Bill Cole."

For a moment the two men looked straight into each other's eyes, and in that moment Bill Cole suffered a sizeable change of heart.

"Get this, Tennessee," he said. "There's sure big evidence in this camp that you are a thief, and the sheriff will be here in two hours to arrest you. As sure as the Lord made little apples, you'll go up for a jail sentence if you're caught. You needn't ask me the particulars, for I won't tell you anything; it's not right for me to tell you what I've told you. I'm giving you the chance to be gone when Caruthers comes, Tennessee, and you better go."

Cole was ashamed of having sent for Sheriff Caruthers. Holman's topaz eyes bored into the other's gray ones. To mountain men of Holman's type, a jail sentence of a single day is nothing less than a cataclysm.

"You say you won't tell me the pa'ticklers?"

"I've already told you too much," declared the superintendent—perhaps he was ashamed, too, of having searched Holman's telescope-bag. "Are you going, Tennessee?"

The mountaineer looked soberly away, at

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nothing, and began to reason with himself. He had intended leaving the Crooked Creek camp, and this seemed a good time for going. It would be cowardly to run like that, when he was innocent, if he had a chance by staying to face the music. But Cole must have spoken the truth in every word, and there was no chance for him if he stayed.

"I ain't to say afeard o' the law, Bill," he said finally; "but I'm a hillman, and no hillman wants anything to do with the law because it's a strange thing to him; he don't help make it, and he don't understand it, and sometimes it don't fit him. By the time Caruthers rides in, I'll know whuther I'm runnin' or not. Whichever it is, though, I'm much obliged to you, Bill. When payday comes, if I'm gone, I want you to give my pay to Boss—and you sure must make him take it, Bill, if you can."

COLE walked off. Holman rose and began to pace a beat around the edge of the clearing; he was close to cover, if the sheriff came earlier than he was expected to come. Boss Hanley, still fighting with himself to keep that which he thought of as hatred for Holman alive in his breast, saw every step his once great friend took there by the high green wall of the woods. McBrey now walked to and fro on the long porch, and he too watched the restless Tennessean.

More time passed, and the Summer sun was not far from its zenith. Sheriff Caruthers was due, and Holman had not yet reached a decision. To serve time in a jail was to him worse than to die, and if he stayed there he would serve time in a jail; and yet, being innocent, he hated the thought of running away. He still walked slowly beside the woods, and Blaster McBrey still paced to and fro on the porch and watched him covertly.

Boss Hanley stood on one foot on an end of the porch, and leaned against a post. In his youthful heart now raged a battle royal, a battle so great that there was no room for even a thought concerning whether Holman was a thief or not a thief. He was near the parting of the ways with Tennessee, and he found it hard to bear. If only he knew that Holman still liked him—still loved him. Then he would warn Tennessee—he didn't know that Cole had already done that—and he and Tennessee would run away together and be two brave and noble outlaws. Whipping had but made his eyes shine like new gold money; now they were filled with tears.

But he dashed those tears aside as a big idea flashed into his mind.

In the clear vault of his memory, quite the brightest star was formed of these words, which Tennessee Holman had spoken to the bully, McBrey: "If you put the weight of a finger on that boy, Blaster, you'll have to whip me. You've got my word for that." Boss now knew how to find out whether Tennessee still liked him, still loved him, and whether he was a man to the bone.

As McBrey turned about face to stroll to the other end of the porch, Boss deliberately began to pick a quarrel with him—to see what Holman would do.

"Blaster," he said, "you're as crooked as a barrel o' fish-hooks. You're as ugly as a pore man's dawg, or a mud fence stuck full o' tree-toads, and your mouth looks like a mud-hole full o' broke-up dishes. Your eyes looks like a lizard's, and your nose looks like a grubbin'-hoe. I double-nigger-dare ye to hit me, ye low-down copperhead snake coward—and ye ain't game ef ye don't, ye scrapin's o' Baltimore's trash-pile—ye rotten, spewed-up can o' cawned beef—y' old buzzard-picked cyarcass of a mangey dead hoss!"

McBrey seemed a little surprised, then he laughed unpleasantly. The Hanley boy went ashen because of his initial failure. The fingers of one of his brown hands began to feel along the waistband of his ragged commissary trousers for the sewing-needle he carried for the purpose of digging briars from his bare feet, and he found it—and in another second he had jabbed it deep into the thigh of Blaster McBrey.

The bully howled, and Tennessee Holman stopped his restless walking and looked toward the boarding-house porch. He saw McBrey snatch the boy up as though he were a rabbit, and give him a terrible shaking, while Boss let out a first-class imitation of the scream of one in mortal pain. Then Holman remembered that which he had said to McBrey not long before—

"If you put the weight of a finger on that boy, you'll have to whip me."

He threw off his coat and his hat, and started for his arch-enemy. The bully set Boss roughly on his feet, shed his own hat and coat, and went to meet Holman; he, too, remembered. Out of the tail of his

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eye, the Tennesseean saw the sheriff ride into the clearing from the lowland trail; a vision of himself wasting to a shadow behind the hateful bars of a prison danced before him, causing him to shudder, but he went on to keep his word and win back the high regard of the boy who once had idolized him—whom he still liked, still loved.

"Run, Tennessee!" Boss yelled frantically. "Run! Run like the devil!"

Little Hanley had seen the officer; but McBrey had not, and McBrey jumped at a conclusion that was vastly flattering to himself, and laughed boisterously. Cole had not seen fit to tell him that the sheriff was coming; moreover, McBrey did not know Caruthers from any other strange man.

The two belligerents met near the center of the clearing. Holman sprang like a panther for the bully, who stepped nimbly aside. Lively sparring followed, while the other loggers, Boss Hanley, Sheriff Caruthers and Bill Cole formed a ring of interested faces around them.

McBrey confidently assumed his old ring crouch, and began a prancing movement that certain fight-fans had once called his "death-dance." He feinted and struck, and Holman took a heavy blow bravely. Holman took bravely many more heavy blows while he was feeling out the ex-pugilist's fighting tactics; then he copied McBrey and gave him the punch all crouchers dread—a half-circle uppercut that landed at the bottom of the bully's breastbone and expelled the air from his lungs in a quick and guttural *hooght* The bully swore. There had been almost unbelieveable strength behind that blow, and it had come with the quickness of lightning.

Again and again Holman copied his antagonist. He gave McBrey other telling uppercut drives, and straights from the shoulder, though he had to take severe punishment in order to get them home. The battle finally took on whirlwind speed, and McBrey lost his head and some of his ring generalship and went to slugging and missing a great deal.

Those blows that he did land appeared to have no effect upon Holman save to bloody him, and always Holman was willing and eager to pay the price of landing a punch of his own. The Tennesseean had become fairly adept in the business of uppercutting to the bottom of the breastbone, and McBrey unwisely left his face unprotected for two seconds too long—Holman took advantage of it and splintered a bone in his hand against the point of McBrey's jaw, sending McBrey crashing through the ring of onlookers and to the ground flat.

Here Sheriff Caruthers was about to interfere regretfully, and Bill Cole held him; Cole liked a good fight, McBrey rose, shook himself, sought a clinch and got it. Standing face to face with Holman, with his hands laced together just above Holman's hips, McBrey put forth a great effort to break or seriously injure his adversary's back—then the mountaineer wheeled a hip into the bully's stomach, threw an arm into a vise-like grip around the bully's neck, and hurled him over his head clean.

And where Blaster McBrey had fallen, there he lay, panting, whipped. He had tried to fight a timberjack with a timberjack's own tactics.

Boss Hanley broke the dead silence which followed.

"Ye'll shake me, will ye, Blaster—y' old buzzard—ye'll shake me ag'in, will ye?" he taunted.

One man laughed just a little. Boss suddenly remembered something important, and he ran so fast toward old John Henderson's that even Rush could hardly keep pace with him. The loggers stared at the panting Holman in amazement and wonderment, and Bill Cole patted him almost affectionately on the shoulder and chewed out some oath-starred compliment. Then Sheriff Caruthers bent over the supine McBrey and ironed him.

"I've had your picture hanging in my office for a year, Henegar," he said triumphantly. He turned half-way around, and went on in explanation, "Wanted for a few little misdemeanors like safe-blowing, Cole."

The officer and the high light of the Old King Cole camp then held court, after a fashion. "Ranze" Henegar, alias Blaster McBrey, permitted himself to be so nearly tricked into a confession concerning the foul scheme against Holman that Caruthers refused to molest the Tennesseean. When the sheriff and his man had disappeared on the lowland trail, Holman went alone to the creek to wash the blood and grime from his face and hands.

A few seconds after he had knelt beside the water, a young woman and a boy knelt

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beside him; he looked around surprisedly, and saw Nan dipping the bottom of her blue percale skirt into the crystal stream.

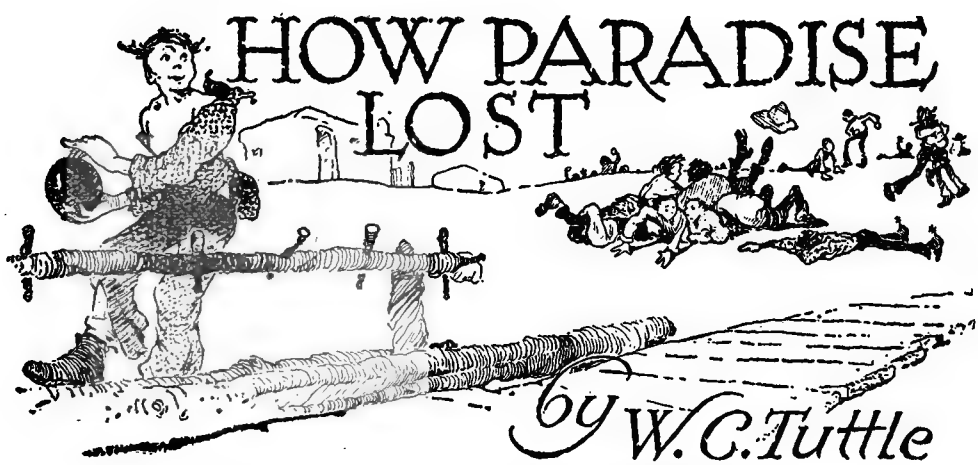
"What you doin' here?" he asked indistinctly.

Nan dipped the bottom of her skirt again, and answered him in a voice that wasn't quite steady:

"B-Boss said you never g-g-got my note —and I didn't want to lose you, Tennessee! Hold over here, T-T-Tennessee—your face is a s-s-sight!"

He saw that she meant it, for her eyes were as bright as new gold money. Boss Hanley touched him on the arm.

"Ye're a gen'ulman, Tennessee," said Boss, "and ye can spank me whenever ye feel like it!"



Author of "Sages in Sageland," "Dobie's Difficullies," etc.

BEFORE I go any further I wish to ask everybody not to question this tale. Maybe you'll say that it never happened, couldn't happen, and that it ain't reasonable. Maybe it ain't. I won't argue the point. I've seen a lot of fool things done, and most of them were done by wise men. It appears to me that there's only the thickness of a cigaret paper between being a wise man or a fool, and—well, I leaned against the side of the cabin, and looks at Magpie Simpkins.

"What was that you said, Magpie?" I asks.

"A athlete is a conglomerate mass of muscle, which coordinates with much brain and brawn, and is looked up to by all men, women and kids."

I ain't in no shape physically or mentally to disprove his statement, so I says:

"You said a lot of unbelievable things, Magpie. Your words thrill me through and through, and leaves me weak in the knees. I sure takes off my hat to you, old-timer, and deigns to inquire this at the head-gate of knowledge: does a athlete always lose his upper front teeth, and does he also and moreover have a loose flap of skin detached from two inches over his right eye, the same of which hangs like a dewlap, and is not a thing of beauty or joy?"

"He may, and again he may not, Ike," says he, sad-like, rubbing said sore spot. "It's all in the game—like getting kicked by a mule or getting pitched off a gentle bronc."

Having had everything explained so thoroughly I merely asked—

"Why this craze for store teeth and skinned heads, Magpie?"

Be it hereby known that Magpie Simpkins is sheriff of Yellow Rock County. He's got tired eyes, a weary mustache, hangs his gun half-way to his knee, and is six feet six from his spurs to his dandruff. I might have said brains, but I play safe in all cases. He'll try anything twice. Most folks will try anything once, but Magpie don't believe in snap judgment.

He tilts his chair back against the side of the cabin, and manufactures a cigaret.

"Ike," says he, "them visible injuries of mine were acquired on the field of battle. I'm a right end. Sabe?"

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Maybe," says I. "It's all in the point of view. When I ends I wish to keep my scalp pristinely intact. According to my lights, Magpie, there's a right and wrong way to all ends."

"Right and left, Ike," he corrects. "You speak of the ultimate, while I orates of the noble art of feet-balling, of which there ain't no sport on earth its peer. Sabe my argument, Ike?"

"Go on," says I; "you have a way of talking that would make me enjoy axle-grease on my biscuits; but I never like to miss the first chapter of a story. Give me some idea of how you got your feet balled up thataway, Magpie."

" 'Doughgod' Smith is our authority. Doughgod went to Omaha with some of the Seven-A cows, and in said city he observes a feet-ball game. He gets enamored of said species to such a degree that he brings back a dictionary of instructions and two principal implements—said implements consisting of aig-shaped leather bags full of wind.

"According to Doughgod this game is of sufficient import for growed-up men to cavort at, so we inaugurates a team, and maneuvers a heap. Somehow or other this rival city of Paradise acquires said extra wind-filled implement of the pastime, with the result that they yelps out loud that she's a howling wolf at the game, and desires the scalp of Piperock before they busts out to conquer the world."

"Is it a good pastime?" I asks, and Magpie gets enthused a heap.

"It sure is, Ike. It's the acme, cream and peer of all contests. 'Weinie' Lopp has got a sprained ankle, Pete Gonyer's got two busted ribs, and you can see how I'm fixed, and we've only practised once."

"What a field for a padded-cell drummer!" says I, but Magpie is too enthusiastic over this legal murder sport to notice my remark.

"Now, since you've come back, Ike, it helps matters a lot. Piperock is short of material to work upon, which handicaps us a heap. We can't afford to practise the wiles of the pastime upon each other for fear that when the day of reckoning arrives we won't have enough trained men to hold up our end. According to Doughgod we got to have a scrub bunch to put us in trim for the main event, and—you ain't got nothing to do for a while, have you, Ike?"

"I'll find something," says I, real quick. "Also and moreover, Magpie, I ain't no scrub, and neither you nor any other fanatical feet-ball fatalist can work upon me. The nearest you'll ever get to that is mental telepathy, and I gives you warning right now that I'm working my mind against yours all the time. Sabe?"

"Ain't you got no public spirit, Ike?" he asks, sad-like. "Don't you wish to help defend the name of your city against the invader?"

"And be a casualty? Or scalped? Not me, Magpie. As far as old man Harper's little Ike is concerned they can come up here and annex us. Piperock is a fair city to my eyes, but she'd pall a heap if I had to view her from a ambulance. You don't need to put tears in your voice, old trailer, 'cause I'm stubborn to a startling degree, and I'm silv'ry-tongued when it comes to talking to save my hair."

All of which may sound unpatriotic to the casual observer, but said casual observers ain't never seen nor heard the city of Piperock when she's keyed up for a contest. I've been away for a couple of months but I know she ain't changed none.

When I rode in I seen "Dirty Shirt" Jones come out of "Buck" Masterson's saloon. He weaves on the steps for a few seconds, pulls his gun, and rings the little bell on top of the Mint hall three times in a row, shakes his head, and goes back for another drink. Any time he misses that bell he's had enough. They used the hall for a school once upon a time, and never took down the bell. It sure is some barometer for Dirty Shirt.

Dirty Shirt Jones might have been a beautiful baby, and maybe his maw was proud of him, but right at his present age he would shock the sensibilities of most any parent. He's medium size, bow-legged a lot, and walks with a sort of a falling forward movement, like somebody had just hit him in the back of the neck. He's so cock-eyed in one eye that he can't shoot with both eyes open—and hit anything, but you can gamble that Dirty sure can shoot. His eyebrows grow so far above his eyes that he appears to be astonished at the world, and he chaws spitting weed very fluently.

I leaves Magpie deploring the fact that I can't see my way clear to be the party of the first part in a justifiable homicide, and

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goes down to Buck's place. Weinie Lopp, "Slim" Hawkins, Doughgod Smith, Pete Gonyer, Buck Masterson and Dirty Shirt are there, and there seems to be a difference of opinion.

"DIRTY SHIRT, you ain't the kinda stuff that heroes are made of," says Buck. "When your city calls you ought to answer."

"Ain't I anshwering?" asks Dirty, propping himself against the bar. "Ain't I just doing that, Buck? You can't slaughter ol' man Jones' fav'rite shon to make a Piperock holiday. Nossir! I'm negative, not and never! Also I'm anti and against."

"What do they ask of you, Dirty Shirt?" I asks.

"Shomething that common shense revolts against, Ike," says he, wise as a owl. "Want me to run with a ball. Tha's my idea of nothing to do. Done it once, and what happens? Ask me what happens, somebody.

"Listen: took little ball, run down street —jus' like good little boy. Run fas'—just like I'm told. What happens? Art Miller lopes up and kicks my feet loose from the ground, Weinie Lopp spurred me in the shoulder and Doughgod kicked me in the ear, and took the ball away. Now they want me to do it 'gain, Ike. Cannibals!"

"Glad to see you back, Ike," says Buck. "This here is the one time that we welcomes all of our floating population back home, 'cause we needs earnest support. We needs brawn and muscle to defend our wives, sweethearts and other relatives by marriage. *Sabe?*"

"You failed to mention a single qualification of mine, Buck," says I. "Brawn and muscle I ain't got but I'm heavy on brains. I ain't got no relatives by marriage nor heritage, and the only thing that's depending upon me is one calico bronc, with sore feet, and one burro, which brays at the name of Lodestone. Considering all such, I begs to remain yours truly and neutrally Ike Harper, Esquire."

Dirty Shirt invites me to partake of some wobble water, after which he went out and missed that bell the first shot, and went home. All of which shows that Dirty Shirt is a sensible person and has a limit.

I saw them practise that evening. Magpie kicked that ball plumb over the top of Buck's place, and then they takes Wick Smith's old wagon, fills her with rocks, sets the brake, and then pushed the blame thing all over town.

"Half-Mile" Smith rides in from Paradise, and sets down with me to enjoy the spectacle, but as soon as them wagon-pushers sees him they all comes over where we are. Me, I don't sabe it at all. They puts Half-Mile on his bronc, takes off the bridle, and then ties a string of tin cans to the bronc's tail.

"Spy," says Magpie, when I asks the reason why. "He's up here from Paradise to spy on our practise, and then give them a chance to figure out a way to combat it."

As I said before, I don't want anybody to question this tale. Just why Half-Mile's bronc deserved cans on his tail, and all that is beyond me. How Half-Mile could get the edge on Piperock by watching a dozen darn fools pushing a loaded wagon around the street is more than I could understand, but I nodded my head, and agreed with Magpie that it was an unforgivable offense.

Sudden-like the city of Piperock is shrouded with gloom. I hears Slim Hawkins singing "After the Ball' in a plaintive sort of a voice, while he deals faro to a lot of sad-faced punchers. I finds Magpie setting on the steps of his office, head in his hands, and a dead cigaret between his lips. I sets down beside him, and asks the cause of the general despondency.

"Ike," he sighs, "some unenlightened son-of-a-Piegan has stole our football. From its resting-place behind Buck's bar it has vanished, and no man knoweth whither. Word comes from Paradise that practise is in full swing, and it deepens my suspicions that somebody has done us dirt. Now we can't practise."

"Get glad," says I. "It gives you all the best of it, Magpie. Just think how their ranks will be thinned when that fatal day arrives. If you get beat you'll have a alibi."

"Alibi ——!" he snorts. "What good is that when all the loose money in the town has been bet?"

I meets Dirty Shirt, and we talks over local conditions and calamities. We discusses the missing ball, and gets sad over same.

"It ain't right nor proper that said village of vice should deliberately handicap our chances, Ike. While me and you are listed in the football directory as noncombatants it stands to reason that we can feel the shame and disgrace of the situation. Is there

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any reason why we should not make an effort to recover said aig-shaped, air-loaded and desirable property?"

"You spoke from my heart, Dirty," says I. "We'll be heroes."

We went to tell Magpie about our little resolution, but we can't locate him, so we gets on our broncs, and points south. Of course Dirty has to miss that bell before we left, the same of which shows that we're primed for the hero stuff.

Paradise must have been taking a siesta when we rode into town. A few broncs nod at a rack, but there ain't a soul in sight. We pokes around behind Mike Pelly's saloon, where there might be somebody in the shade, and we finds Half-Mile Smith.

He's been dallying with the corn-juice so long that he's joyful. We waits until he's through singing, and then applauds him a lot, when we gets off our broncs.

"How's football game?" he croaks, wise-like. "Haw! Haw! Haw! Betcha forty dollars on Paradise. No?"

"You got a fine bunch of ball-rustlers down here," says I. "Ain't you Paradisers got no honor, Half-Mile?"

"Piperock's careless," says he, sleepy-like. "Paradise's wise as a owl—you betcha. Keeps football in shafe in bank. Yessir, we're wise," and Half-Mile begins snoring.

Me and Dirty looks at each other, and Dirty nods. He takes the handkerchief off Half-Mile's neck, and tears it in two.

"Masks," says he. "As a usual thing we ain't desperadoes, Ike, but right now we got to show Paradise that she ain't as wise as she thinks she is."

We walks around the saloon, and sneaks across the street below the bank. Nobody sees us, so we sneaks up behind the bank, and puts on our masks. There ain't a sound, so we angles along the front of the bank, bolts right into the door, with our guns in our hands, and sure run into something. I gets whirled right around, and sets down with my mask around my neck, and my gun lands twenty feet away. Dirty is bumped plumb off the steps, and sets there in the dust, staring at the bank.

I looks and observes a big Jasper, with a mask on, a gun in one hand and a sack in the other. He seems to have been bumped hard, too, and he cusses one expressive piece of profanity, and trots around the corner.

Me and Dirty looks at each other for a minute, and then out comes the cashier, with a riot gun in his hands. He shoots both barrels in the air, and yells long and loudsome for help and assistance.

Me and Dirty don't need no assistance. We just gallops around to where our broncs are, and we shakes the dust of Paradise off our feet. As we hits for the open we sees a general rush toward the bank, and we opines that Paradise town has woke up.

WE DON'T hold to the traveled highways. We ain't outlaws, except in heart, but we're wise that Paradise ain't going to consult our immortal souls in a case like this.

"I hates all bank robbers, male, female, black, white or brown!" says Dirty Shirt, looking back, and touching his bronc with his quirt. "That one plumb ruined our chance to do an honest job, and if we don't get a-going, Ike, we'll regret it a lot more. That posse is on the wing."

"We didn't do it," says I, and Dirty nods.

"Yep, you're right, Ike, but Paradise don't know it. From now on they'll guard that place so a Piperocker can't get within a mile of it."

We're hazing along through some rough going, when all to once a bullet plows into the ground in front of Dirty's bronc, and Dirty dismounts over the bronc's head in such a manner that he hangs up by his belt on a big mesquite. My mount seems to get Spring fever all to once, and Ike Harper sets down in a cactus. Dirty manages to unbuckle his belt, and we holds a council of war, while Dirty picks some of the spines out of my anatomy.

"We've been shot at," says Dirty, peeved-like. "Let's go up higher on them rocks and show him where to head in at."

We done that little thing, and gets shot at three times. We gets a glimpse of several men, working in closer all the time, and they seems anxious to inoculate us with lead poisoning. Another chunk of lead spings off the rock in front of us, and just then Dirty gasps out loud:

"Look at the blame fool, Ike! Showing his whole head!"

About sixty yards away, behind a pile of mesquite and rocks we can see a man's head and hat. We can't tell which way he's looking, but he sure is one nervy cuss. Some of that posse see him at the same

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time, and the twigs and rocks gets splintered a few. Dirty leans his Colt over a rock, and is just about to pull, when something happens that never happened before, I reckon.

Dirty lays his gun down and starts to roll a cigaret, but she don't roll good or Dirty can't seem to wet the edge, so he throws it away.

"How do you feel, Ike?" he asks, awed-like, and I says:

"Sick. Sick as ——! How are things with you, Dirty?"

"Hazy. Let's me and you go away from here right now."

Well, that posse is so busy down there that they don't see us leave, and about a mile from there we finds our broncs, and rides home. We ain't got much to say. Dirty remarked—

"Ike, I'm glad I ain't got that on my conscience."

That's about all we said, except me saying—

"You and me both."

When we got to Piperock we immediate and soon hunts Magpie. He's in his office so we goes right in.

"Magpie," says I, "the Paradise bank was robbed today, if you don't know it."

He looks at me and Dirty, leans against the wall in his chair, and rolls a smoke.

"Is that all?" he asks.

"Ain't that enough?" inquired Dirty. "You're the sheriff, and you'll likely be notified."

"That ain't exactly all, Magpie," says I. "Me and Dirty seen the posse shoot the head plumb off that robber."

"Plumb off?"

"Absolutely!" says Dirty. "Just like this. *Bung!* goes the gun, and *Zowie!* goes head, hat and all into the air! What do you know about that?"

"Just shoot it off or bust it?" asks Magpie.

"Off," says Dirty. "Hat and all hopped into the air. Must have used one of them old 50-110 guns with an explosive bullet."

"——!" snorts Magpie. "I had hopes that somebody would hit it with a 30-30 steel jacket.

"Yeah?" says Dirty. "What do you know about it?"

Magpie opens a cupboard and produces a football. He holds it up for us to see, and then tosses it back.

"You darn pelicans pretty near balled things up twice for me, and I had to put my hat on the other ball and stick her up in a bush while I got away. That bronc of mine ain't got no speed, and when you jaspers caught up with me I thought you was part of the posse."

PARADISE sure came in force upon that fatal day, when the destinies of two cow-towns hung in the balance. The sight of all them stalwart, loyal sons thrilled me and Dirty Shirt a lot. We feels mean and unpatriotic about it, but Dirty philosophizes thusly:

"There will and always has been a choice few who remains out of the conflict, and whose duty it is to carry away the dead. Let me and you form an offensive and defensive alliance to look after the dead and put the cripples out of their misery. Our mission is mercy. How does she sound to you, Ike?"

"Like the tinkling of drums and the blare of a banjo," says I. "We'll take my burro Lodestone along to pack away the dead. How's that?"

"As an organizer, Ike, you've got General Coxey hung to a cactus."

We got Lodestone, and on our way back we meets Half-Mile. He greets us joyfully, and wishes to wager a few pieces of silver.

"I'm picking Paradise to win," says he. "We got some team, and 'Telescope' Tolliver can kick a ball so far that it costs eight dollars to freight it back. How's your sympathies?"

"We're meek and mild, and ours is a errand of mercy," says Dirty. "We don't favor no politics, religion nor nationality. Me and Ike are going to succor all ailing humanity during the great struggle. Sabe?"

"Which means you ain't got no nerve nor opinion," states Half-Mile. "You two are just passive particles, as I see it."

And he leans on Lodestone's rump.

We props him up against a boulder in the shade. Dirty takes ten dollars out of Half-Mile's pocket, writes a note and puts it in Half-Mile's unresisting hand. Said note reads:

I have bet ten dollars against four bits, with Dirty Shirt, that Paradise beats Piperock by fifty tallies. Dirty is holding stakes.

"That's our first offensive act, Ike," says

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Dirty. "I hope to die if I ever seen a burro what can kick like that, and at them odds it's a good bet if I lose."

We pilgrims on up-town, where we're met by "Scenery" Sims. Barnum would have been glad to have met Scenery, and heard his voice. He looks like a coincidence and squeaks like a rusty hinge. He looks us over, and then plays a few bars on his E string, like this:

"You fellers better look a little out today. Magpie Simpkins has deputized me to keep the peace, and I've got a star to prove it. If you fellers has got any ulterior purpose with that mule you better forget it. *Sabe?*"

"Peace be with you, Officer," says Dirty Shirt. "Peace is our motto. You keep your own peace, and don't monkey with the ambulance. Half-Mile pestered our stretcher-bearer, and now he lieth beside the way. You monkey with the wheels of mercy, and that tin star will only be a small percentage of what you'll see."

"I'm just telling you!" he squeaks. "I gives warning before I strike."

"Go hole up with a prairie-dog!" advises Dirty, and we goes on.

We gets down on the main street, and finds that the game is about to start. You'd think it was the Battle of Waterloo to look at them regiments. Piperock starts to line up with only seventeen men, but when she sees the herd from Paradise she adds on until there's about twenty-five men on a side.

"This here game, according to Hoyle, is played with eleven men on a side," states "Tellurium" Woods, but Mike Pelly gets up on a box, and replies—

"This here contest is for the everlasting glory of the winning town, and several hundred dollars to boot, and it ain't right and proper for no eleven men to carry that burden."

Magpie and Mike flips a coin, and Magpie seems to win. He takes a ball and stands her up in the middle of the street, and spits on his hands. Judge Steele stands up in a chair, shoves a gun into the air, pulls the trigger, and history begins to be wrote.

I shudder to think how far that ball would have went if Magpie had kicked it, but he missed. He took a gallop at it, and a mighty kick—so much of a kick that when he missed it his feet went higher than his head and he comes down on his back on the ball.

Waves and waves of booted and spurred humanity went over him, forward and back, and me and Dirty gloated over the work in store for us. Sudden-like, out of the maelstrom, comes "Mighty" Jones. He's got the ball in his hands, carrying it like he was afraid to bust it, and in his eyes is memories of long ago. He walks toward us, while the fight goes merrily on, smiles with joy, when he walks slam into a hitchrack and lays down to sleep with the ball in his bosom.

Me and Dirty dumps him across Lodestone, takes him into Buck's place, and lays him out on the pool-table. He still retains the ball, and we ain't got the heart to take it away from him.

We goes out again, and finds out that them savages ain't found out yet that the ball is missing, but now they've sort of quit their mass formations and are fighting in groups of two. Magpie and Mike are sort of cuddled together out there, and are snoring a duet when we get our ambulance to them.

About that time the war party discovers that the ball is gone, and they stops being belligerent for a minute. Mike Pelly rises up and states that he wants to fight it all over.

"These here Piperock Apaches don't gouge fair," he complains. "It ain't fair to use spurs on a man when he's down."

Magpie sets up and listens to Mike's complaint, and then says:

"I knowed we'd beat you. Why don't you fellers lose gracefully? What was the score?"

"Beat us!" whoops Mike. "Beat us? Did they beat us, Telescope?"

"No," says Telescope. "Some sucker has stole the ball, and now we got to call it a draw. Just when we're about to score we gets robbed."

"Stole it, eh?" whoops Magpie, trying to rub some circulation into his legs. "Who stole it? Our side? You're loco! Another minute and we'd 'a' scored, and some of your own tin-horn sports stole it."

"Yeah—like blazes!" snaps Mike. "We'll show you burglars! Get our own ball, Ricky."

Dirty takes hold of Magpie's sleeve and draws him to one side.

"Magpie," says he," what do you have to do to score a tally?"

"See them ropes stretched across the street? Well, any time a man carries a ball

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under them ropes it counts five for his side. If me or Telescope happens to kick the ball over it counts one. What do you want to know for?"

"None of your inquisitive business!" grunts Dirty. "Come on, Ike."

We went into the saloon, just as the judge shoots again, and the old battle is on again.

"Are you a loyal son?" asks Dirty, earnest-like, and I nods. "Would you question the legality of a performance if it meant everlasting glory for your town? No? Well, let's see if she works."

He went behind the bar and got a bottle of hooch, which he takes over and pours a man-sized drink between Mighty's lips. Mighty coughs and splutters for a minute, sets right up and begins to sing, off key:

"We're tenting tonight, tenting tonight, tenting on—say, what the —— is going on around here?"

"Mighty," says Dirty, "would you be a hero?"

Mighty looks foolish-like at us, and then he sees the ball and begins to get back to the present time. He whispers—

"Who won?"

"Piperock will," says Dirty. "Come on, hero."

DIRTY held the ball behind him when we went outside. We just got out there as Telescope kicks that ball about a mile, straight up, and down it comes right into that howling mob, which spills all over it.

Dirty hands the ball to Mighty and shoves him off the steps.

"Run!" he hisses. "Run under that rope and lay on your belly on the ball. You'll be a everlasting hero, Mighty."

Mighty weaves past the struggle and out to the rope just in time for some of the Paradise crowd to see him fall on the ball, and they sets up a yell. Just then Art Miller drags out of the other side of the crowd and gallops toward the other rope, and Magpie is right behind him, yelling:

"Go on! Dog-gone you, go on!"

There ain't much said for a while. Magpie and Art comes limping back with their chests out a foot and waltzes right through the crowd.

"Five for us, boys," crows Magpie. "Five tallies for us, and that——"

He looks where the crowd is looking and sees Mighty Jones, one of Piperock's prides, just beyond that rope with the ball on the ground in front of him. Magpie scowls at him for a moment and yells—

"Where did that come from?"

"Five for us!" yelps Paradise, in a bunch. "Thanks, Mighty!"

Magpie walks down and leans on the rope.

"Mighty," says he, "would you mind telling me just what in —— you are doing here at this rope with that ball?"

"Being a hero," says Mighty. "Ike and Dirty said that——"

"What did Ike and Dirty say?" squeaks Scenery Sims. "Did they tell you to throw this game to Paradise?"

Me and Dirty don't care for arguments, so we went around the corner and climbed up on top of the saloon. It wasn't our fault. Magpie didn't tell us which rope. We crawls over to the front where we can still see the game. Half-Mile Smith sees us up there, so he comes around to the back and climbs up to us.

"How's the score, Dirty?" he asks.

"Fifty-fifty on scores and casualties, and the battle rageth."

Dirty brought a bottle with him which gives us all the comforts of home.

"How did I act when I made that bet with you, Dirty?" asks Half-Mile. "Was I acting all right?"

"Pulse seemed normal and color good," grins Dirty. "You must have had great faith in Paradise, Half-Mile."

"Twenty to one and a fifty-point margin would make a man say so," groans Half-Mile, and then we all gets interested in the game on account of increased noise.

There seems to be a difference of opinion, as usual, and Magpie is the principal orator.

"That tally goes!" he yelps. "We agreed that when anybody kicked the ball over their enemy's rope it counted one. The score is now six to five in favor of Piperock."

Piperock cheers a heap, and Paradise howls, but nobody seems to dispute the legality of the affair, so Magpie waves for silence, and then orates some more:

"We deplores the fact that Paradise don't seem to know nothing about the rules or etiquette of this here noble game, and we gives them one more chance before we claims said contest on the foul rule. I will hereby start the ruction going and hope for the best."

Paradise howls like a lot of wolves, and I

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figures that Magpie was crazy like a fox when he made everybody leave their guns in his office before the game started.

He stands that ball up in the middle of the street again and old Judge Steele shoots another hole in the sky. Magpie profited by former experience and don't get overanxious to kick the ball. He lopes up, skids on his left foot and just about peels that poor little ball. Paradise is lingering close to see that everything is fair, and that ball hits "Chuck" Warner plumb in the face, and he does a back flip-flop and grovels in the dust.

The ball hops to one side, hits a post in front of "Wick" Smith's store, and bounces right back into the street. Piperock and Paradise met right there, but all too late.

Comes a yaller streak from under the sidewalk, and Wick Smith's coyote pup has got that ball. Piperock and Paradise fought for glory while that pup gets a face hold on that ball and begins to have one little game of its own.

The survivors sets up and sees that aboriginal canine with their ball, and they immediate and soon sues for possession. A coyote ain't never where he was a fraction of a second ago, so they gets dizzy in the chase. Buck Masterson goes into the saloon and comes out with a gun, but loyal citizens sets down on him and take away the weapon. The pup ain't much bigger than the ball, and he's changing ends too often for a man to be sure of his shot.

Comes a whoop up the street, and here comes Scenery Sims on a bronc, swinging out the loop of a rope as he comes.

"Gimme room! Gimme room!" he squeaks.

He had plenty of room. The pup ducks through "Muley" Bowles' legs and spins for the corner with Scenery right behind him, swinging a big enough loop to rope a box-car.

Scenery is sure some hand with a rope, I give him credit for that, 'cause he drops that loop right over the town pump, bucks his bronc across a watering-trough and goes about sixteen feet high when his cinch busts. The coyote and ball fades out of the picture.

Me and Dirty forgets about our heroic work with Mighty, so we goes down, gets our ambulance, and pilgrims out to annex Scenery Sims. Them athletes are too busy to notice us, so we dumps him across the burro and lays him out on the pool-table.

Dirty takes another drink and refuses to accompany me any more.

"Ike, I can't stand no more scenes of carnage," says he. "My soul revolts within me to see our noble sons fall thataway. Poor old Scenery! He may never squeak again, Ike. You and the jackass keep up the good work. I'm weary, and I would rest my soul."

WHEN I gets outside I finds another argument, with Magpie on the stump. This time he's crabbing about the way that Paradise ball appears to the naked eye. Mike Pelly argues that it's all right.

"That ain't no way to cinch up a ball!" contends Magpie, holding said article. "What's the idea of the whang-leather loop?"

"I laced that ball," says "Ricky" Henderson. "The other lacing got busted, so I put in a good string and left enough for a loop to put around your wrist like a quirt. You dog-gone pelicans always hunting for something to alibi about. Play ball!"

That loop must have been of a certain value, 'cause Chuck Warner got it around his wrist, and he's only two feet from the rope when they poured water on his head. Paradise does a war-dance, and everybody gets excited. Only two feet separates Piperock from disgrace, and our town feels the stigma. They gets Chuck up on his feet again, and the two armies line up.

"Let her go!" yells Mike Pelly, and that crowd seems to swell in the center, cuss words fills the air, and then somebody yells—

"Whoa!"

The crowd eases back, and the ball is within six inches of the rope. Six men are piled up, and all the rest are limping circles and nursing parts of their anatomy.

"Don't nobody touch that ball!" yelps Hank Padden, and I enters their midst with my ambulance. "Let her lie right there! The next charge we wins undying fame and glory. How long before the hour is up, Tellurium?"

"Five minutes," yells Tellurium.

"Hang on to yourselves, you cannibals!" says I. "You misguided bunch of cow athletes will have to wait until I removes the dead."

I picks Chuck Warner up and lays him across Lodestone. I thought that Chuck

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was half dead, but he was only half-witted. He throws his leg over that burro, sets up as straight and solemn as a owl, and opens his mouth.

"Yeo-o-o-ow!" he yelps.

Lodestone swings his rear end around, and the football rolls over against his heels. *Bung!* There may have been living things that could kick a ball straighter but nothing ever lived what could have kicked it harder. The ball sailed into the wind like it had a place to go and was in a hurry. We all stands there gawping at it, and neglects Chuck, who spilled on his head the first buck.

The ball goes high and handsome, drops on top of the Mint hall, takes one graceful bounce, and hangs up against that bell. The leather loop hooked right over one side of the bracket, and there she bobs in the wind, far above the maddening crowd.

"Mark the exact spot where it laid!" whoops Mike. "Piperock can't pull nothing like that and get away with it. Get over, mule!"

Mike ought to have knowed more about burros than that. No sane man ever shoves a burro. Dirty Shirt is tending bar for himself when I brings Mike in and lays him on the table. Dirty takes off his hat to me, and bows low.

"Tha's goo' game," says he. "Never 'joyed myshelf so much before."

I went back and sets down on the sidewalk. Magpie limps over, and sets down with me, and watches Paradise put up a ladder. I can see that Magpie hopes they never reach it.

"How much do you stand to lose?" I asks.

"Three months pay and my self-respect. If we don't hold them snake-hunters for another five minutes we're lost—that's all. Nothing but a miracle can save us, Ike. Nothing but a miracle."

They've got a ladder up there now, and willing hands hold it firm, while Ricky Henderson climbs up to the ball. Just then we hears a noise behind us, and there stands Dirty Shirt.

He's got his hat in one hand and a gun in the other, and his eyes wink shut when he tries to smile to himself. He weaves on his legs for a minute, bobbing his head like he was considering things, and then he gurgles—

"Gotta shee how much more dish-i-pashun I can endure."

He braces his legs apart, clicks back the hammer of that .45, and we both glances up at the top of the Mint hall as that gun roars. Ricky has just reached up to loosen that loop, when the ball seems to yank loose from his hand, comes an audible *foo* and that ball shrivels up completely.

Dirty Shirt has got his head stuck forward like he was listening, and then he shoves his gun back into the holster, sad-like, and nods his head—

"Either I gotta plenty or I'm plumb deef from what I got, so I bids you adoo and so-long."

He weaves down to his bronc, and points toward the Medicine Hills.

"All bets is declared off," states old Judge Steele, when everybody limps up for a legal decision. "Piperock will have to be content with a moral victory."

"What for kind of a victory is that?" asks Tellurium Woods.

"It's a point of honor which never before was won by a coyote pup, a kicking burro and a soused sourdough," says the judge, wise-like, and the lame and the halt and so forth agreed.

What do you think?

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The SEVEN DIAMOND RINGS

By R. N. Wall

Author of "The Passing of Gorilla George."

IT WAS dusk when Dan Farmer walked briskly out of the Savannah station at Broad and Liberty Streets. He should have arrived much earlier but a delay had made his train three hours late. As he turned toward the water-front, he drew his hand across his breast to make sure of the safety of a small case of red morocco leather within his inside breast pocket. The case held seven diamond rings, lately in the possession of a con man called "Silky Bill."

Farmer's business in Savannah was to sell these rings, for a thousand dollars if he could, to a "fence" named Chase, with whom Dan had dealt in his shady past. That was when Farmer had been a yegg. Now he was a prospective onion-grower and he needed the thousand to complete the payment for a farm near Talbotville, on which it was his one desire to settle down with his wife and child and lead an honest life.

As he loitered along, paying more attention to the street scenes than to the direction of his steps, Farmer became involved in the maze of narrow alleys of the older quarter and so strolled into Pink Court just as the lights were flashed on. Pink Court was a poor place after dark for a stranger with a pocketful of diamond rings. Not that Farmer cared; he had grown up in the Chicago district below the Loop; he had known Five Points before it became Mulberry Bend Park, and he had been familiar with the Levee section of New Orleans in its palmiest days. He was a slender little man, but his muscles were steel-hard under his silky skin and his alert and ready face denoted coolness in any emergency.

Dan began to realize that he had missed his way. Behind the windows of the old brick houses, Pink Court was waking up. Attracted by the thrumming of a banjo, he paused to ask his way at the door of "Big Mattie" Smith's eating and lodging house.

Near the entrance sat Big Mattie, stolidly smoking a cigar. Big Mattie said she was Spanish; her face had something of the tint and feature of the Indian and something of the negro. Anyway, she was six feet tall and she weighed two hundred and forty pounds. She had fourteen rings on her eight fingers and she wore patent-leather shoes with French heels in which she could not walk.

In the back part of the dining-room was the orchestra—a coal-black, merry-looking negro, picking at a banjo on his knee. At one of the tables sat a tall man with a swarthy, repulsive face, who looked like a Mexican, and a woman whose dark eyes seemed at variance with her blonde hair.

As Farmer was about to speak, the big Mexican sprang to his feet with a growl of rage, thrust his plate clear across the table so that it fell to the floor with a crash, and struck his companion across the face with the palm of his hand.

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"I'll learn you," he roared in a smother of oaths.

The woman screamed and raised her hand to her cheek, which crimsoned through the enamel. The Mexican grabbed the woman by her yellow hair; Big Mattie puffed peacefully on; the banjo-player never missed a note; but Farmer, all his clean blood hot, jumped into the room.

"Leggo that woman, you swine!" he yelled.

The Mexican looked up in astonishment at the intruder. It is not considered good form in Pink Court to interfere in such matters.

"What in —— are you mixing in my business for? This here's my woman!" He wore the snarling smile of a wolf.

"You can't bat any woman around in my sight," said Farmer shortly, his pleasant face set in stern lines.

"You better vamoose," said the tall man, still smiling wickedly, his white sharp teeth a flashing line across his dark ugly face.

He had released his hold on the woman, who cowered in her chair. Farmer's eyes left the Mexican an instant to glance at her, and, as he did so, the big brute swept out a razor. He brought the blade backward into the handle as he pulled it out and held it open in his hand, edge outward, the blade grasped firmly between fingers and thumb.

"I'm going to cut your heart out," promised the man.

Farmer was no coward. If a revolver had been pointed at him he would have ducked and run in, but the shining razor gave him a momentary weakness at the pit of his stomach. He knew what a cut a razor held that way will make, and he had the imagination to see vividly the long gash that the keen edge would make in his white skin.

"Boss," chuckled the banjo-player, who had never stopped his plunking, "Ah think yo' betteh go away from hyeah."

As a matter of fact, Farmer thought so too. The revolver he had taken from Silky Bill was in his bag at the station. But even had he been willing to abandon the yellow-haired woman, his position did not favor retreat. A backward glance showed him that Big Mattie had closed and chained the door. She had kicked off her French-heeled shoes and she held one of them poised like a hammer by the toe. In the other hand she still held her cigar and above her head a smoke ring floated unbroken.

Farmer looked again at the Mexican, who was advancing on his toes, the razor lifted. Then things began to happen with the rapidity of a barrel of fire-crackers all going off at once. Farmer snatched a bottle of pepper-sauce from a table and shattered it over the Mexican's head. The tall man howled with pain, dropped the razor, and caught up a napkin to wipe his blinded eyes.

As Dan reached for another bottle, he saw the yellow-haired woman seize the razor and hurl it through a window. At the same time he became aware that Big Mattie was pounding the back of his head with the heel of her shoe. He swung to confront her, and, as he did so, the jovial banjo-player picked up a big ironstone platter and brought it down upon Farmer's head.

WHEN Farmer came to himself, he was lying in a little open shed. He remained very quiet at first as he strove to arrange his thoughts. He ached all over. His head seemed much too big for him and he found that his hair was matted and sticky. With an effort he sat up, but his head swam so that he let himself slip back.

The moon was shining, and, as he set his teeth and raised himself again, he saw that he was in an out-house half full of garden tools and kindling. The wood on which he lay was very lumpy. He felt for his hat and found it. Then he dragged himself slowly from the shed and saw that he was in a garden that stretched away to the dark back of a large and handsome house.

It was very beautiful in the moonlight.

Farmer wondered where he was, but he realized what had happened. He had been beaten senseless and carried some distance from Pink Court. Then a terrible thought burst upon him. Ten to one he had been rolled first. His hand shot to his breast—and fell away as Dan gasped his relief, for the little lump of leather with its hard projections was still there. The rings were all right.

A bell struck two. With great pain, Dan drew himself erect. A gravel path led his feet to a gate in the rear wall of the

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garden, through which he passed into a narrow alley. He moved along slowly, shouldering the fences, until he came out upon a broad street. He steadied himself against a lamp-post. Then he heard the sound of wheels and in a moment a black, slow-moving shape forged into view. It was an old-fashioned hack.

Farmer made his way carefully to the curb.

"Hey!" he hailed the driver. "Can you take me to a good hotel?"

"Sure kin, Boss," replied the negro driver.

Farmer opened the carriage door and climbed heavily in. Then, as the hack started, his consciousness gradually slipped from him, and he was brought to himself only by the driver shaking his shoulder.

"Yo' hotel, suh," he said.

Farmer clambered stiffly out. He could stand a little more firmly, but he was still weak and shaken. He put his hand into his trousers' pocket and drew it out empty.

"They did roll me, after all," he thought dully, unable to care very much so long as the rings were safe.

"Wait a minute," he directed the driver.

The years he had bunked with strange mates in box cars and cheap lodgings, and an occasional police-station search, had taught Farmer that it was well to carry a small reserve of cash in an obscure place. He asked the driver for his knife, and with it slit the lining of one corner of his vest. From this amateur safe-deposit he pulled a twenty-dollar bill.

"Gimme a hand inta the dump," he said to the grinning darky, "and I'll get this changed."

The seasoned night clerk on duty greeted them without surprize. Farmer said that he had left his bag at the station, where this clerk promised to send for it. From the ticket pocket of his coat Farmer produced the check, which the thieves had overlooked. Dan explained his condition by confessing that he had had a drop too much, had fallen, hurt his head and got lost.

If the clerk noticed the absence of any alcoholic odor, he did not say so, but had Farmer shown to his room. Dan did not stop to undress. He eased himself down upon the bed, and, as the room whirled 'round and 'round, let himself be swayed out of sight and sound and consciousness.

When he awoke late the next morning his head was still sore, but it was clear. He pulled himself up painfully, for he was stiff, and crossed to the mirror.

"Well," he addressed his reflection, "it's lucky you weren't picked up and run in last night, for the judge would have given you forty years on sight, this morning!"

The little man's looks did contrast sharply with his usual neat appearance. His trim gray clothes were covered with dirt; his collar was a disgrace; his hair was glued to his head; his blood-shot eyes stared out of an unshaven face.

He went to the basin and made himself as presentable as he could. There was a big lump on his head and his scalp had been cut, though not deeply. His bag had been sent up, so he was able to brush his clothes and change his linen. Then he sought the barber-shop, and, after a kindly colored man had shaved him and put some soothing lotion on his head, he felt much better and in trim for breakfast.

This time Dan did not try any short-cuts but took the most direct way to Mr. Chase's. That gentleman dealt in marine stores as a business and traded in stolen property as an avocation. A rich and respected merchant, he was probity itself in everyday affairs, but some eccentric twist made him love to dabble in crime.

His business afforded perfect opportunities to dispose of loot, for he not only outfitted ships, but handled all sorts of queer merchandise. What was safer than to sell a stolen diamond to a sea-captain bound for the Chinese coast? But what interested Farmer most was that unlike many "fences," Chase gave good value in a trade and his word was as good as his bond—while his bond was good at the bank.

The ship-chandler's store was down on the water-front. The place was full of spicy scents, the strongest the clean pungent aroma of tar. Farmer made his way between piles of marine supplies to the glass-partitioned office in the rear. A clerk within replied to his inquiry for Mr. Chase with a jerk of his head toward a closed door and the advice to knock and walk in.

DAN did so. Mr. Chase was seated behind a desk of which the flat top was formed of a single magnificent rosewood slab. Not a paper marred its symmetry and Mr. Chase

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seemed to have no other business in life than the leisurely eating of a big red apple. Near him stood a sandalwood basket filled to the brim with the same fruit.

Mr. Chase was a small man, with a dry wrinkled face in which glowed two sapphire eyes. His head was bald and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles rested on the end of his long and prominent nose. He was in his shirt-sleeves, which were of unusual fineness and dazzling white by contrast with his leathery face and wrists. He was leaning back in his chair against the pulled-out upper drawer on one side of his desk, with his thin shanks in snowy socks resting on the pulled-out under drawer of the other side.

"Howdy, Dan," he said at once, "glad to see you," and stretched out a skinny paw.

"You remember me?" said Farmer, smiling, a little surprised.

"Bless my soul, my boy," returned the old man with a chuckle as though Farmer had said something funny, "I never forget anything. Haven't seen you lately. Working these parts now?"

"No," said Farmer, "not the way you mean. I've quit."

"So-o-o?" whined the old man, a curious expression in his sapphire eyes. "Thought maybe you and I might—but never mind."

"Yes," asserted Farmer, "I've turned my last trick. I've been wanting to quit for a long time and settle down on a farm with my folks. I got a place all picked out near Talbotville, and I'm going to grow onions." The little man's eyes glistened with pleasure as he called the prospect to his mind. "I just need a thousand dollars to make the place mine, and I got here seven little diamonds that I want to trade you for that amount."

"All right, my boy, glad to do it if they're worth it. Diamonds are going up all the time and lots of people want them. Let's see what you have."

"Two of 'em are beauts," said Farmer cheerfully, "and while the others ain't so much—"he reached into his pocket and dug out the red leather case—"I think the bunch is worth a thousand, easy."

He dumped the contents on the shining desk.

"Bless my liver and lights!" ejaculated Mr. Chase.

"Rolled, by glory!" shouted Mr. Farmer.

On the rosewood desk were half a dozen round wire rings, the kind used on small curtain rods, and a few small, sharp bits of gravel.

"Oh, my aunts and cousins!" chirped old Mr. Chase, bursting into a cackle of shrill, senile laughter. "Oh, my pants and buttons! Is that what you want a thousand for, Dan?"

Farmer sat and stared at the little pile of junk. His keen pleasant face grew red as Mr. Chase's reddest apple. The happy air with which he had entered the office had changed to a look of grim disgust.

"There ain't nobody to blame but me," he said at last. "I butted into something last night that was none of my business, and got beat up good. Seems I was touched at the same time. But—" he glared wrathfully at the old man—"if you don't stop that doggone chuckle, I'll wring your neck!"

"I can't, Dan," the old man coughed. "You're so funny. Oh, my buckles and bands! You come in and tell me you want a thousand dollars and produce a handful of ballast!" And he went off into a series of cachinnations that threatened to choke him.

"It may seem funny to you," Famer said sadly and more quietly. "I want to live straight and it just seems like I can't. It looks like life was a brace game. I've just got to have a thousand dollars and I don't know no way to get it."

"Well, my boy," said the old man, becoming grave, "there's no use getting discouraged." He opened his desk and took out a squat, square-faced bottle and a dingle glass. "My drinking days are over, but I keep this for my friends. Take a drop and cheer up—and this never paid any duty," he added with his wicked old wink. "Drink success to crime! Go out and think things over and if nothing comes to your mind, come back and see me, and we'll try to fix up a little plant."

Farmer drained a glassful of the colorless liquor, which slipped down like syrup, but which seemed to glow like fire in his veins. No liquor ever distilled, however, could instantly lift the cloud of gloom in which he labored.

"All right," he said shortly. "Thanks. I'll see."

He stumped out and walked savagely along for some distance, blindly, raging at fate. At last he came to a little square and

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dropped down upon a bench and gave himself up to the apparent contemplation of the statue of Count Pulaski which graced its center. As a matter of fact, the noble Pole was as distant to Farmer's eyes as his exploits were to Dan's knowledge.

"That wrinkled old devil of a Chase," the burden of Dan's thoughts ran, "would like nothing better than to have me pull some mess of chestnuts out of the fire for him. He's the worst kind—a smart man that's crooked for the love of it. If I get mixed up with him, I'll never get clear again."

His thoughts went back to his hated past in the underworld. Could he never rid himself of its shadow? Was he never to live in peace on the farm he craved? The little man was near to despair. What was the use? Then the fighting quality in his very bones made him thrust out his chin and take a grip on himself once more. He would not fall for the wily old tempter's scheme. Why not take his rod and stand up Big Mattie's place and either get back his stones or get shot trying?

He suddenly realized that a woman was standing in front of him, apparently uncertain whether or not to speak. He dully took in her high-heeled slippers, her light-colored silk stockings, her short skirt and her rakish hat. As he observed her more closely, Dan saw that her cheek was so bruised that neither the rouge upon her face nor the white veil she wore quite hid the mark. As he looked at her, she seemed to make up her mind.

"HOW do you feel?" she asked in a low rapid voice and sat down upon the bench beside him.

"Why, all right, ma'am," he answered, puzzled—and then recognized the woman with the yellow hair to whom he owed his present predicament.

"I was mighty glad to see you," she went on. "I was afraid they'd bumped you off."

"It takes a lot to kill me," said Farmer with a rather painful grin, "but they certainly done a clean job otherwise. They rolled me and they beat me up for fair."

"I'm sorry. I reckon that greaser would have near killed me if you hadn't butted in."

"I'm glad of it, then," said Farmer grimly, "but it was sure one expensive rescue. They touched me for a thousand dollars' worth of rocks."

"Good Lord!" gasped the girl, for Farmer now saw she was little more. "I am sorry. You're lucky you got out alive. How did you?"

"Darned if I know," admitted Farmer. "I come to in a shed on a pile of the most splintery kindling wood I ever see." He touched himself ruefully here and there. "How is it you don't know what happened after I got mine?"

"I beat it," said the girl. "I was scared. When that big greaser gets soused he's worse'n small-pox, and Big Mattie is pure devil, drunk or sober. I skipped out the back way and went to bunk with a girl I know. I'm not going back to Big Mattie's any more, either. They're too rough."

"They ain't exactly gentle," Farmer agreed, "but I can be right rough myself, sometimes. Just now I was trying to figger out what sort of a play would get me my rocks back."

"Maybe I can help you," suggested the girl. "I been living there some time and I know the house."

"Could you?" said Farmer, brightening. "Could you put a plan of it down on paper?"

"I'll do better'n that," promised the girl, her big eyes sparkling through her veil. "I'll show you the way."

"How do you mean?"

"I'll go with you. I got a key to the back door and I can sneak you up the back stairs to Big Mattie's room. She keeps her coin in it somewhere; she don't believe in banks, and your rings would be there too."

"Oh, that wouldn't do at all," objected Farmer. "I don't want no woman with me on a raid—excuse me, ma'am," he added, as the girl's dark eyes flashed, "but I can work best alone."

"Ever do anything in that line?"

"I never done much else," said Farmer, with a little laugh, "until lately. I had made up my mind to quit, but it seems like I can't get rid of the habit—or other folks won't let me."

"You can count me in on this play," announced the girl firmly. "I ain't a-going to let you lose out after having helped me, and I want to get square with that gang, anyhow. You meet me here tonight about eleven, and we'll bust that joint wide open."

"I wish you'd just draw me off a plan and lend me your key," said Farmer dubiously.

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"Nope!" snapped the girl, and rose. "I ain't no draughtsman—the plan's in my head and the key's in my stocking—take it all together or pass it up."

"All right, you little spit-fire," grinned Farmer with a certain amount of admiration. "You're on; eleven o'clock."

After the woman had disappeared Dan rose also, and, still limping a little, went to a Turkish bath where he remained for some time. When he came out, his muscles were more supple, and the slight headache which had gathered during the day was gone. He passed the time as best he could until eleven, when he returned to the little square and found the woman waiting.

The way was devious but not long. They glided around corners and through side streets and wound up in a network of alleys in which the deep sand made their footsteps slow and noisless.

"Here we are," the woman whispered.

They stood in the shadow of a wall, in which there was a gate, but it was heavily padlocked and the girl had no key. Farmer measured the distance, sprang, caught the top and drew himself up, careless of the scratches upon his hands caused by the broken glass and the spikes which made the wall bristle like a trench in the war zone. The woman watched him with admiring eyes.

"You better pass me the key and wait here," he whispered.

"Cut it," the girl snapped back. "I'm as limber as you are; just gimme a hand."

Dan reached down and helped her up. Then he dropped to the other side and reached up for her. The woman let herself slowly down into his arms, so that all her soft weight sank against him. She seemed in no hurry to disengage herself; her full red lips were close to his and her dark eyes shone in the moonlight.

"Say, girl, I'm married," whispered Farmer hastily, trying to back out of the clinch.

"What difference does that make?" she breathed. "So was I, once. Kiss me."

"My Lord!" thought the embarrassed yeggman. "This may be worse than losing the thousand!"

The girl thrust her face forward and kissed him full on his unresponsive mouth. Then she sprang ahead and made her way swiftly through the refuse and ash-barrels that cluttered the dirty yard. The girl was very graceful. The soft warmth of her lips still clung to Dan's. His head whirled a little. Then he mastered himself.

"You darn old fool!" he chuckled, and his moment of weakness was over.

They paused at the door and listened. From the front of the house came laughter and music and the clink of glasses, but the rear was dark and still. The woman kicked off her slippers, felt for her key, and opened the door.

They entered. The girl led Farmer through the darkness, her warm hand firmly clasping his, to a stairway, which they climbed, slowly and with care. It was a solid old house; no creak betrayed them. Near the top the lighted hall above came into view and the girl laid her lips almost against Farmer's face to whisper. He shrank back a little, no longer allured; the vision of his farm had returned to guide him and all his senses were set on his task.

"The door at the end of the hall," the woman breathed, "is to Big Mattie's room. See that curtain in the hall close to the door? That's over a sort of open closet where she keeps her linen. You slide into her room and dig up your rocks if you can. Leave the door open. I'll slip behind that curtain, and, if I hear anybody coming, I'll give a little hiss. You got your gat?"

"Yes," whispered Farmer, "but a gun is only good to bluff with. I gotta prejudice against murder, to begin with, and then, a shot would raise the house. Any idea where she keeps her coin and stuff?"

"No," replied the girl. "She's too foxy for that. Give the bed the once-over, though—she got sore at me once when I come up and saw her fooling around it."

SHE slipped into the alcove, while Farmer cautiously pushed open Big Mattie's door. A burning gas jet revealed a mixture of barbaric splendor and tawdriness. There was a showy wardrobe with a plate-glass door, a cheap oak bureau and wash-stand, and a magnificent mahogany tester bed with a great deal of scroll-work and carving, of which the most striking ornaments were the four carved pineapples which formed the ends of the posts.

A thick, red carpet, stained and dirty, covered the floor, and curtains of blue satin were looped back from the closed blinds. A chaste steel engraving of the

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sad parting of two lovers hung on the wall between two obscene whisky advertisements. The air was stale with cheap perfume, tobacco and gin.

All this Farmer sensed rapidly. Where would Big Mattie hide her loot? He called to mind all his experience; it was not great, for he had been a man to crack safes rather than to rob bedrooms. Still, there were certain customary spots where women hide things and his first task was to look through these.

As he advanced toward the bed a faint hiss came from the hall followed by the sound of feet upon the front stairs. Dan waited, every nerve tense. His revolver was in his side pocket, but he did not draw it. He heard the steps come along the hall. The door, which Dan had left ajar, was pushed wide, and the tall, repulsive Mexican entered.

The Mexican, in a gay humor, was humming a tune. His mouth opened as he saw Farmer, but whether in surprise or to cry out, Dan never knew. Without hesitation, he hit the big man squarely upon the point of the jaw, with every ounce of his weight and all the speed he could muster behind the blow. Jaw and arms flew up, and the big man toppled straight forward into Farmer's arms. Dan caught the limp bulk and eased it to the floor, as the girl peeped in.

"You better hurry," she admonished. "Big Mattie may be up next and she's twice the devil he is, though he's bad enough, the pig!"

She stepped across the room and kicked the Mexican viciously in the face with her slim stockinged foot.

"I wish I had a brogan on," she grated out.

"Here, don't kick a man when he's down," protested Farmer, shocked at her frank brutality and the change in her pretty face. "Go back and keep an eye out. If Big Mattie comes up we'll lay her alongside of him. I'll be as quick as I can."

He went through the room like a whirlwind, but found nothing of value. He paused to consider the bed again and his eye fell upon the carved pineapples. One of them did not look quite straight. Some instinct prompted him to examine it more closely. It turned in his hand.

He had it off in a second; a thread cut upon it, fitted into a spiral turned within a cavity in the post. The first thing that his hand touched in this hole was a small chamois bag with the seven rings in it. Then came various jewelry and beneath it all, a fat bundle of bank-notes.

Dan stood for a moment in thought; then a grin quirked his pleasant features as he counted the roll. It amounted to fifteen hundred and forty dollars. He jammed it into his pocket and replaced the jewelry, including his diamond rings, in the cavity. Then, his grin becoming broader, he tore a scrap of margin from a handy newspaper and scrawled—

Received payment in full for seven diamond rings

He stopped to consider the unconscious Mexican and added—

and one knock-out.

He stuffed the paper into the hole and screwed the pineapple in place.

"Got 'em?" whispered the girl, as he emerged from the room.

"And then some," grinned Farmer.

The girl's face lighted.

"I knew you were the man to do it," she said, and caught his arm.

"Come on," said Farmer, drawing away. "Let's get out."

Once on the street, he passed the woman a handful of bills.

"What's this?" she asked.

"Your part of the loot," Dan explained. "I took a thousand for my rocks and left 'em; I also collected something extra for damages. That's your half."

"Aren't you going to take me with you?" appealed the girl.

"I can't," said Farmer kindly. "I got a wife, I told you, and a girl kid that'll be your age in a few years."

They had paused in the dense shadow of a chinaberry tree. The woman began to cry softly. Farmer shifted from one foot to the other, greatly embarrassed.

"Oh," sobbed the girl, "it's hard to lose you. I do love you!"

"You just think you do," Dan assured her.

"No," she said, "but it's all right. Just kiss me once and promise you'll hunt me up when you come back to Savannah."

"All right," he said, "I promise," and kissed her once, solemnly.

"But," he whispered to himself, as he departed so swiftly from the vicinity that his gait was almost a run, "I ain't never coming back!"

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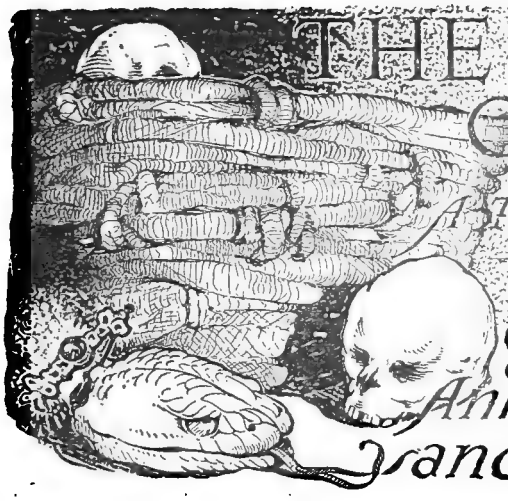

THE BROOCH OF TLAYA

A THREE-PART STORY.
CONCLUSION.

By Anne Throop Craig and Louise Rice

XIV

AS TIME went forward Tlaya grew less and less satisfied with her pact with the Red Sweynie, for even her vanity could not conceal from her that the Viking remained untouched by her charms. Moreover, by cautious, wily talk, such as she well knew how to make, she discovered that Fedalm had made a greater impression upon the man who had had her in his keeping for a brief moment than she had thought, and she began to suspect his intention of taking the girl for himself.

Kapultep, too, whose jealous rage at the thought of Fedalm's long continuance in the dun of the handsome MacDubhas burned him like a fire, had come to the same conclusion as the queen, so that the two old plotters again drifted into their custom of secret counsels.

Many and long were their hours of deliberation; but no one overheard what they had to say, for even the dogs were shut out from the great hall, and Eric and his cousin and all the Norsemen tried, in vain, to find some way to hide therein. Kapultep had never really settled upon the trick which had warned Fedalm's lover, and thus enabled him to be at hand to rescue her, but he was sure that some one had been in the hall on that night, and while he did not suspect the disguise which had been used, he determined that the door should not be opened, for so much as a crack, while he and Tlaya conferred and discussed their difficulties.

Therefore the MacDubhas were in ignorance of a plan which the two perfected, treacherous in all directions, but especially dangerous to themselves.

Red Sweynie, being not a fool, was quick to see something in the manner of the queen and the priest which had not been there before; also, she did not press him so hard as she had to attack the MacDubhas at once. By these signs he was sure that some plan was afoot which did not include him, and he ordered some of his men to hide among the rocks above where the queen's herders watched her cattle, so that they might overhear any rumors which were afloat among the Picts.

Now beyond that place of the cattle, and across the two wide paths and the footpath which ran from the rear wall of the queen's fortress, there were dales and glens where the hunting was good, and there, often, the MacDubha men could be found; and there was a sort of truce between them and Tlaya's Picts, so that sometimes a word was passed between them. This the queen knew, as she knew all that happened among her own people and she determined to take advantage of it, believing, which was the truth, that the Sweynie's men did not speak with the Picts—many of whom knew naught of the Norse tongue, while the Norsemen knew not one word of the Pictish—and sure that no one of Sweynie's men would exchange a single word with a MacDubha.

But she reckoned not on the shrewdness of the Sweynie himself, who had found one among the new additions to his forces,

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brought from the countryside, who understood the Pictish; and him he had brought up from the camp on the shore, to lie among the rocks above the herders, and interpret aught that they might say to the Norsemen who lay with him.

In this way a scheme which the queen had hatched, with Kapultep, was known to the Viking almost as soon as it was put into execution. For the Picts were a people of much chatter, and what one knew they all knew, so that they talked much among themselves of an order which the queen had sent out, that if any Pict spoke with a MacDubha he was to let fall, as if not knowing what he revealed, that the queen and the priest expected soon to have the princess back in her own kingdom, for the Viking had promised to attack the MacDubhas' dun on the third night of the harvest moon.

Great was their queen, said the Picts, the most cunning of women—for they, themselves, were to go with her on that very night to steal away the princess, while the dun was protected only by old men and women; for it was a sure thing that the MacDubhas would not wait to be attacked, being much stronger in men than the Sweynie, and would lay in wait for him near his encampment. And, while they were away, Fedalm would be taken and their stronghold put to the flames. Also, there would be much loot, and on this point the Picts licked their lips, for they were thieves, above all else.

Thus, said they, chuckling, the queen would have the girl back, her servants would have much of value to portion among themselves, and as soon as the MacDubhas returned and found their dun destroyed, they would believe that in some way the Viking had outwitted them; so, hot with rage, they would storm the camp of the Sewynie, and undoubtedly he and they would all but destroy each other, while the Norsemen of Tlaya's kingdom, having their princess back, would do naught to assist either side.

Tlaya had taken a long chance in thus revealing her real plan to the Picts, for she knew them to be incapable of keeping silence upon a secret; but, considering that they were promised all the loot of the MacDubha dun, she was sure that none of them would betray her to Fedalm's captors, while she feared not at all that the news would reach the Norsemen of her own kingdom, since even such women among the Picts as were wedded to Norsemen would keep the secret, fearing conflict between their own people and their husband's people, should the matter get abroad too soon.

As for the Sweynie, the queen reckoned not upon him, counting that there was no way by which he might hear of the plan.

When the Sewynie's men returned with all this information the Viking swore a great oath, for the plan was a tricky one, and might have succeeded, had he not found it out, for the third night of the harvest moon was close at hand, and he had, but a few days before, agreed with the queen that the attack on the MacDubhas would not take place until after it—the queen alleging that it was some sort of a festival with the Picts, when they would be abroad in the night, as was an ancient custom with them, and that they would not fight with a good heart on a night devoted, by tradition, to merry wanderings.

Of course, as the Sweynie instantly understood, this little story was told to account for any suspicion the Viking or any of his men might have, should they chance to hear the echo of people stirring after dark. The Viking pulled at his great beard, and for half a moment was minded to go straight to the dark queen of the Picts, and offer to throw in his lot with hers, for he saw that she had more cunning than any chieftain he had ever known.

But the memory of Fedalm's bright beauty swept back upon him, and the recollection of the deadly feud which the MacDubhas held against him, and at once he called his captains to him and hastened to lay such plans as would cause the queen's to be of no purpose.

And when they had spent an hour in deep talk, they laughed, for they had found a way, not only to block Tlaya's plans, but to make them of assistance, in their partial execution, to the Viking.

Now the Picts performed what Tlaya had set them to do well, for they strayed into the glen where the MacDubha hunters most frequented, and there fell into talk with one of them, dropping such boasts that one of the MacDubhas suddenly took the speaker by the throat, and threatened to kill him did not he speak fully. So the Pict, pretending to be greatly frightened,

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told the tale as it had been agreed upon, but when he cried that he should be freed, the MacDubhas would not listen, but took him away, a prisoner, so that he might not tell that they knew of the plot.

But his fellows, who lay concealed near by, carried the news to the queen, so that she considered that all went well and arranged for matters accordingly.

Now the third night of the harvest moon, the moon, red and full, rose early in the evening, and set long before midnight, so that Tlaya and her people, and the Red Sweynie and his men, and the MacDubhas all held themselves in readiness to move when darkness should overspread the land.

Seumas had wanted to be the leader of the expedition against the Viking, but Angus had overborne him in that, and the leach had added his word, for Seumas, while his wounds were healed, had not as yet his full strength, and as one of the brothers would have to stay to guard the dun and Fedalm, Angus reasoned that it had better be his elder brother.

Not without serious consideration had the MacDubhas decided to go out to give battle to their foe, but their reasoning had been even as Tlaya had guessed. For they were sure that the help for which they had sent must be within a day's sail, at most, of their shore, so that they could count upon overwhelming numbers to finish the fight, should the first brush go against them, and it seemed better to take the fight away from the dun, if possible, once if the Sweynie did, perchance, make a break in the walls or any of his men succeed in entering, fire would undoubtedly add to the dangers of the MacDubhas. But if the Viking were engaged at a distance that danger would be averted, for a time, at least.

The Pict, following the queen's commands, had said that the Vikings' force would follow the path which ran among the rocks between the queen's fortress and the MacDubhas, and although, as the time approached, his cowardly soul led him to say that if he had promise of release he would tell a truer tale, it was decided to pay no heed to this, for it was, most likely, but a trick whereby he would gain his freedom.

Therefore Angus planned to lie in wait for the Sweynie midway between the fortress and the dun, where low bushes gave good concealment, and to fall upon him suddenly as he thought to turn toward the dun. The fleet runner who had carried the cry for help to Seumas, on the other occasion of the MacDubhas' fight with the Viking, would wait within hearing distance, so that if, by any mischance, Angus should need assistance, a horn blown would tell him of it.

"I like it not, dear lad, that you should go out to meet a foe while I remain within walls," Seumas said, as the moon began to dip toward the horizon, "but I would not act the part of folly, which you and the leech contend it would be. Therefore go, my brother, and be sure that the greatest treasure which our house possesses shall be well guarded in your absence; and do you guard yourself as well as a good fighter may, that you may return to her."

Fedalm, standing beside Angus, put out her hand and laid it upon the arm of Seumas.

"I am of all women the most beloved of the gods," she said, in a high, ringing voice, "that two such men should so value me. And I count it a favor bestowed upon me by their good will that I should see my lord go forth to battle in so righteous a cause as this."

NOW Angus had been fearing this moment of departure, thinking that Fedalm would swoon or weep and so unman him, and therefore her proud and courageous words sent his blood flying to his face, so that he had never been more good to look upon than when he put an arm around her and cried—

"Is she not a mistress well worthy of our house, O you men of MacDubha?"

And for answer his warriors, in battle garb, shouted out the cry of their clan:

"*Aicil Dubh na creige! Dubh na creige!*"

And Fedalm took their homage right royally, standing so straight, with high held head and a smile upon her sweet lips, that now were curved into a semblance of that stern line which had been her father's, and this was the picture which Angus carried away with him, as he set out to do battle with the foe who had done him such wrong, the foul stain of which he meant to wipe out with the ravager's blood.

Now Seumas set watchers to look carefully to every part of the walls, and men to

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lurk far down, along the cliff-top, so that should the runner come with his cry for help, one might shout it to another and so it would reach the dun swiftly; and he arranged who should go with him if that need arose and who should remain; and to Fedalm he showed a secret room in the wall of the hall, where, at a desperate need, she might hide.

"Be not alarmed, my sister, at these things," he said, "for I look for naught save that Angus and our men will either destroy the Sweynie and his men, or hold them, so that they retreat for a few hours, and give your kinsmen and ours time to arrive. For far up the coast there is a report that a number of galleys have been seen, of late, and it is my thought that they are ours. But it is ever my way to be slow and cautious, and to prepare for all things, even though they seem most unlikely."

"I have no fear, Seumas," Fedalm replied, "for we can but do what we must, and the gods will surely favor so righteous a cause as ours. But let life or death come, be sure that I will not prove me an unworthy daughter of my father."

If Seumas had loved her when her beauty and graciousness were all that he saw, he loved her now ten times as much, so that he choked, and could answer naught, but fixed his eyes on her face; and at last the veil that he ever kept upon them when he looked upon Fedalm was swept away, although he knew it not. And the girl, who had learned from her lord what a man's eyes may say to a woman's, looked steadily into them, startled, at first, and then with a sweet, compassionate, gentle gaze which slowly drew Seumas to his knees beside her.

"Forgive—forgive—" he said brokenly. "I meant not that you should know."

"There is naught to forgive, Seumas, my brother," said Fedalm, and she touched his dark head with her hand, "for true love is ever good, and the gods themselves must bless it, even though it receives not, perhaps, all that it may crave. But it may receive much. You have my love, dear brother, in so much as I have any to give beyond that which my lord holds."

And Seumas listened with awe in his heart to the solemn, wise words of Fedalm, for he saw that in that night she had passed from a child into the knowledge and power which a queen should have; and he bowed his lips until they touched her robe. Then, when he stood up and looked down upon her, Fedalm saw only the kind, brotherly eyes of Seumas, and, with her new-found wisdom, she said no more, but the MacDubha went about with a light on his face which had never been there before, so that his clansmen looked at him wonderingly.

And all within the dun were so very silent that even noises of the woodland came faintly to them—the barking of foxes and the cry of night birds and the trampling of deer.

"Almost it would seem possible that we would hear the first sounds of the fight," Seumas said, as he made the rounds of the walls.

And at that instant the noise of battle did, indeed, break out, but not in the direction from which it was expected. Down in the glen it arose.

"What can that be?" the MacDubhas demanded of each other in amazement, for they knew that it would have been impossible for Angus to work his way down there in so short a time.

And it was no small skirmish. The ring of weapons told that it was no band of marauders attacking country folk—rumors of which had reached the dun—but the conflict of armed men; and suddenly, above the tumult, where one body seemed to pursue the other with triumphant cries, there was heard, even above the roar, the creaking and jingling of a chariot as it was driven furiously away.

"By the gods," Seumas exclaimed, as he stood, transfixed, among his captains, "what is the meaning of this? Chariots! There are no chariots hereabouts save those of Tlaya, yet what can her chariots be doing in the glen?"

"The road by which she drives to the fire tower goes past the mouth of the glen," said one, "perchance she rides on one of her secret visits to that place and has been set upon by a band of robbers—those of which the country folk whisper."

"That may be," said Seumas, thoughtfully, "and yet, if my ears play me not false, there were two companies engaged. Hark—hear you that?"

For now one band drove the other, and there were death-cries, groans, shrieks and dreadful, rattling sounds of men whose breath was choked with blood welling up

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from the wound within them. The MacDubhas, who had heard the tumult of many a battle, rightly interpreted all that so discordantly arose upon the peaceful night air. They knew that men, many at a time, were dying in the dark glen below, where never a light showed.

Then Seumas saw that Fedalm had come out and was standing behind him, and in the dim light of a half-smothered torch, which a bearer held, her face was white, for it was the first time she had ever heard the terrible cries of men who die by the sword. Yet she stood quietly, and her hand did not tremble as Seumas drew it quickly within his own.

"It is not Angus, sister," he said, "for he would not have been able to reach the glen by now, and what it is I know not."

"Seumas, there is somewhat strange in this," the girl said earnestly. "I also, who came down at the sounds of battle, heard the chariots. Know you not that there are none on all this coast save Queen Tlaya's? Methinks that dark wife of my father has some evil hand in this night's doings. Would it not be best to send a runner to where my lord lies in ambush, to see that all goes well with him? Perchance the tale of the Pict was not all a true one, as he tried to tell us."

"Return you to the hall, sister," Seumas answered quickly, "and wait there, for your thought is a good one. I will force this prisoner of ours to speak, and your woman's eyes should not look on such work," for he meant to torture the Pict, should it prove necessary.

And Fedalm, while she knew what he meant and shuddered, yet said no word against it, for she knew that the life of her loved one might depend upon the knowledge which could be brought from him in that way.

But Seumas needed not to do that at which he turned sick, for the Pict, when threatened, and when he looked around upon the fierce warrior faces which ringed him about, fell to his knees and confessed the whole plot. Seumas and his men were so astonished that after he had ceased speaking they stared dumbly in each other's faces.

"By the gods," Seumas exclaimed, at last, "then who were these that drove away the queen and her men? For a victorious company passed out from the glen but now, and those who are left are but corpses and dying men! If it was the queen who was driven off, who are these who saved us from attack? In truth, I know not what to think of this."

"Let us consult the princess," one of his men said. "Knowing the country hereabouts far better than we, she may be able to tell us of some chieftain, far inland, perchance, who would have word of the queen's midnight expedition, and would choose to fall upon her then."

But Fedalm knew that all the country beyond held no such chieftain; nor could the Pict, though they drove him by questions and threats and promises, say aught, for terror had so taken hold upon him, hearing that his queen was worsted in battle, that for the time every memory of the Red Sweynie was out of the little mind he had. And so they wondered, until Fedalm said:

"Since the alarm as to the Sweynie was false, doubtless Angus is lying there among the rocks, and wonders much why the foe does not come. Let one go to inform him, and bid him return. We may now wait, perchance, until our kinsmen from across the seas come to us."

"Wisdom sits upon your head, O Fedalm, even more beauteously than your crown of hair," Seumas said, and his captains nodded assent to that.

XV

THE runner whom Seumas sent, as Fedalm had suggested, to tell Angus of the change, had no more than taken a few paces down the path on the cliff-top when he came flying back.

"One comes!" he gasped, and even as he spoke one of the men who had been waiting to bring the word of the blown horn leaped among them.

"I have heard not the horn," he said, "but the man nearest to him who should have blown it has heard signs of a struggle and now there are figures of many men crossing the sandbar to the queen's island; also, he with the horn heard a shout, which he declares to have been that of Angus. And one of us who ran forward to see what had happened returns not."

And at that Fedalm showed her first fear.

"Something has happened to him!" she

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exclaimed. "There is a trap of some kind in all this, set by my evil stepmother. O Seumas, go you quickly to him."

"Fear not, Fedalm!" Seumas shouted as he sprang down among his men from the doorway of the hall. "I return not without him!"

Then, with hardly any delay, for all had been arranged for, Seumas and most of the warriors marched away to the aid of Angus; or if that was not necessary to satisfy themselves as to what was happening in that night of surprises, and behind them they left but a few, charging them on no account to open to any save to those whose voices they knew—but of danger to the dun they thought, indeed, little. Nor did they believe that anything had happened, save that Angus might have caught a few of the strangers who had attacked Tlaya's chariots and who might have been wandering around away from the main body.

But not far from the dun itself, they found that which told them that danger was abroad, for one of their outposts lay there slain. A javelin had pierced his heart.

"Aye—so?" Seumas said as he bent above him and the MacDubha men growled in their throats, for the weapon had been thrown from behind and the man had fallen without a chance to cry out.

Grimly then the MacDubhas went on, treading softly as they could and taking care that their weapons did not clash against each other, and as they neared the place where Angus had meant to lie in ambush they hid behind trees and rocks while two or three went forward, slipping through the shadows to see what they could see. And soon they were back, running so that Seumas sprang out to meet them, hearing disastrous tidings in their swift and heedless feet.

"Master, our men are gone from the place where they lay and four of them are dead a short distance off. And a piece of the plaid of Angus hangs from a bush far over the cliff-top!"

On that they all ran forward and Seumas, heedless of caution, shouted the name of Angus with all his might, but there was no answer. And when he came to the place he searched the ground carefully and knew that many of the MacDubhas and probably Angus has been surprised and dragged off prisoners, for the ground was scarred with the mark of where they had dug in their feet in the effort to resist their captors.

"Gone!" Seumas exclaimed. "And gone without the sound of even a short battle. What can this mean? Never has such a thing happened to a MacDubha before."

"Doubtless they have been taken to the island of that cursed queen," one of the men replied, "it was her people with the captured men of ours, that were seen crossing the sandbar."

Many of the men sprang forward to dash themselves over the cliff-top, but Seumas stayed them for a moment.

"Wait!" he commanded. "Even though my heart cries to me to lose not a moment, let us use our wits before we go forward. Can any of you think of aught, save that as the Pict confessed, the queen thought to trick us to take the princess and burn our dun—for some reason, then she came with her Pict warriors to the rear of our walls instead of to the front, and there was surprised by the band of robbers who have been sweeping the countryside.

"Then part of her men came back this way, and perhaps creeping stealthily because of fearing the band who had dispersed them, found Angus and our men and springing upon them, stopped their mouths with their own plaids and carried them away captive."

He waited and none spoke, for so it seemed to them all, but Seumas shook his head.

"I do not believe that that is what happened," he said, "for when did Picts, even in overwhelming numbers, ever play such a trick upon any of the Northern race? But even if that be not so—if the robber band it was which captured them, still toward the island they went."

Again he paused and no man spoke.

"There is naught to do then, but to follow to the island, even though we go into we know not what. But do you, Muirdach, stay on the path here within hearing of the dun and at the first sign of danger to it, come you to the island for help."

"Nay, Seumas, let one of the young lads take that part," Muirdach begged. "'Tis not fit that a warrior should skulk in safety while——"

But Seumas silenced him with a gesture and then, leaning close to his ear, he whispered—

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"Only my brother Muirdach can guard that which is more than life to Seumas."

And then all the MacDubhas went sliding down the steep path which led to the chalky road which wound by the shore and from which they could cross the sandbar—no more than awash at that hour of the tide—to the island.

Seumas and his men gone, Muirdach went along the path gloomily enough, for while he prized the trust which Seumas had reposed in him he felt that his place should have been beside his brother in whatever trouble he might be running into. And then a sound, very small and far, struck him motionless, while the very tips of his ears pricked with his effort to hear and to locate that which had but faintly come to him. He thought at first, that it must be some echo of the fight which might be occuring on the island, and then he laid himself flat on the ground and soon was sure that it was the tread of many men coming in his direction, men walking carefully, but unable to still the vibration which their feet gave the earth.

Hesitating, Muirdach harkened toward the dun, but it was not there that the sound arose; it was behind him. Flattening himself against the trees he then turned backward and crept along, looking, listening, trying to pierce the darkness of the path.

The sound was near and now he was sure it was the sound of armed men, for a little shrill clashing which arose now and then was, he knew, weapon striking against weapon as the men walked close together on the narrow path.

What to do he did not know. To run and warn the dun seemed the right thing, but if these were strangers and he were within the walls when they came it would be all but impossible for him to get out and take the word to Seumas, while the gate of the dun would surely be stanchly held by those within, for a space at least. So Muirdach determined to hide in the underbrush beside the path until he could be sure who these men might be, and what their errand, and if foes, he would then go as fast to the island as he could.

NOW the men came near and he saw that they were too tall for Picts and walked with the free stride of the Norsemen and he thought that here at last were the Sweynie's men come to attack the dun, but in that instant one of the nearest spoke and he knew the voice.

"By the gods," Muirdach exclaimed, leaping out in front of the speaker, "what do you here, Eric?"

Eric peered at this man, suddenly springing from the darkness, astonished.

"And is it you, Muirdach?" he exclaimed in his turn. "What has happened? Is our princess safe?"

"Aye," was the reply as Muirdach fell into step beside Eric and the train started onward again, "though there have been very strange happenings around the dun and——"

"Have you seen aught of the Dark One and her Picts?" Eric demanded.

"She had some encounter with whom we know not in the glen below the dun," Muirdach replied, "but how is it that you come and in such force?" For on glancing back along the path he had been amazed to see the long line of men dimly strung out in the starlight.

"Thus it is, Muirdach," Eric replied. "On this night before sundown, Kapultep declares this to be an occasion of feasting, for those of the Druidic faith. 'Tis a habit of his to give out such feast days without warning, and we Norsemen thought nothing of it, but my cousin who is as sly as a fox in this business hid near the house of a Pict and he caught some words which told him that mischief was afoot, and he told me.

"Then I went to one of the greatest cowards among them and asked him into my house on a pretext and there I tied him and closed his mouth with cloth and in time—" Eric's voice was very grim—"in time he confessed to me that the feasting was but an excuse for the Picts to be abroad in the night and that the Dark One—may the gods smite her—planned this night to draw out some of your forces by a trick and to carry away our princess to the fire tower. The Pict swore that the princess was to be returned to us at the fortress, but we know the queen better than to believe that.

"It took some time for us to find out all this and when we did, and when I had aroused all the Norsemen, save such as are wedded to Pictish women and therefore can not be trusted, we found that the Picts and the queen and Kapultep and the chariots were all gone. Therefore we took our weapons and we hid our women and children in a

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secret place in the woods and we came on here as fast as we could, to rescue our princess, if such a thing is possible."

"In truth, never did I hear of such work at cross purposes as this of tonight," Muirdach exclaimed, holding his hands to his whirling head. "I can make naught of any of it. Listen, O Eric, and see what you can spin from it," and he told him all.

Before Muirdach had half-finished his tale, Eric had called others of the Norsemen to come closer, that they might hear also, but though they all made many conjectures, none could unravel the mystery.

"Say you that Seumas is gone to rescue Angus from the Island of the Mystic Shield?" Eric inquired. "So? Then will I leave part of our men with you to help guard the dun and I and others will go to help Seumas. For from this night Muirdach, we are your brothers in the kingdom, and under the hand of our princess and her lord. No more will we endure the yoke of the false Pictish woman and her wicked priest.

"Our women have with them much of our gear, and such as we could not take away we burned. Let the Dark One rule her sly and treacherous and thieving people; no more will we consort with them. And such of our brethren as are wedded to their women may stay or come with us, but of their women we will have naught."

"Now, by the gods, your words are music to me," Muirdach exclaimed as he clapped Eric's broad back with all his might. "'Tis a thing I have long thought on. Why wait for this and that to happen? And you come in a right good time, for with your help we will drive the Sweynie from the land and keep Tlaya shut up in her ugly fortress among those dark people of hers and this good land shall be yours and ours."

And all down the line of Norsemen there was a subdued rumble of pleasure, for although they had left behind them homes which had been theirs for many years, their hearts had never paused from taking flight; and now that they knew they were to be with their beloved princess and the men of her lord, whom they knew to be just and brave as well as good and light-hearted, they could have sung in their happiness had not caution counseled otherwise.

Now they were before the great gate and the watchers on the walls challenged them sharply, but when they heard the voices of Eric and of Muirdach and heard who were the men they brought with them, they ran joyfully to open the gate.

"It were better that you leave only a few here and take the best to the help of Seumas," Muirdach said, as they paused before the gate, "for the gods only know what were the men whom he followed. There is a path which leads downward from below your feet here which will take you there quickly. Do you go and I will watch here until I see you crossing the sandbar, so that I may be sure that Seumas has your good right arms by his side."

So it was agreed and Muirdach stood on the bluff-top until he saw the line of little figures passing over to the island, on which he marvelled much, that there was no sound of battle nor sparkle of lights. A number of the Norsemen whom Eric had left with him stood there also, and behind them the gate was ajar for them, while the watchers stood beside it. They were all feeling relaxed and at ease, for with this addition to their fighting forces they were sure that soon they could do with the Sweynie as they pleased—and could deal with whatever marauding band had come into that part of the country.

Then as Muirdach turned to go in, thinking that he would take these Norsemen to their princess, that both she and they should be rejoiced in each other—then as he turned to make a half-jest to the men behind him—and as the watchers within the walls sent a lad or two running to the steward, that some good mead might be in readiness in the hall, for the freshment of these new brothers—in that moment fire and sword, destruction, pillage and rapine struck upon the dun of Dubha.

XVI

THE Red Sweynie's galleys, letting it be know wherever they thought it best, that they had good service and good treatment and loot without stint for such fighting men as chose to come on board, had succeeded in gathering a far greater number of men than the Sweynie had thought possible. And to cap his good fortune, a sea rover, bent on robbery along the coast, had slipped into the cove where the two recruiting galleys were at rest, on the very day before the one set by Queen

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Tlaya for her attack on the MacDubha dun.

The stanger had at first tried to treat the Sweynie's galleys as captives, but when he heard the chieftain's name no more thought of that was his; and he was more than glad to throw in his lot with the Red One, seeing what a rich prize was here for the plucking.

For the Sweynie planned, not only to exterminate the MacDubhas, but to take over all of Tlaya's kingdom; and he promised the sea rover a large share in the loot, in return for his help.

So that it was a confident and assured band which set out from the Sweynie's encampment and what they had planned to do was really a series of master strokes.

First of all, part of the war-party, now a very large and well weaponed one, would hide in the glen; for it was from there that Tlaya and Kapultep meant to attack the dun. And this was not so impractical as it seemed, for the walls were slightly manned there, as not being in much danger and the Picts, who knew every foot of the ground, had agreed to climb the steep sides of the ravine, surprise the guards, put knives in their throats before they could cry out and then help the rest of their men over the wall.

Since all the best fighters were away with Angus—a fact which had been ascertained by spies, who had lain in the tall grass to see them pass—the only one really to guard against would be Seumas. Him the Picts were instructed to kill at whatever cost. and then, securing the princess, they were to fire the dun at many places and flee through the rear door, down the glen where Tlaya would be waiting to dash away with Fedalm.

Silently then, those who were assigned that part stole into the glen and soon after came the queen's people, as silently, save for the creaking of the chariot, and no more had the Picts started up the path to the dun than there arose from behind every tree a man with a sword who clove them in two. So swift was the rout, so cruel and strong the weapons that men died by the dozens, nor saw where to strike a blow in their own defense.

The queen, herself, would have been captured, had not her horses taken fright at the din and carried her away, for Tlaya, otherwise, would have leaped down into the fray, not for defense of her people, but for pure rage that she should be thus strangely opposed.

Having killed or driven off all of the Picts, the conquerors went away from the glen by the chariot road which was still rusty from the hoofs of the queen's plunging horses, and passing beneath the dun they went rapidly along below the bluff-top to wait at a prearranged place on the shore, for what other work they had to do.

Meanwhile the Sweynie himself, with his best men and in the proportion of three to one of the number led by Angus, had come across the rough country which lay back of his own encampment and Tlaya's fortress and was already concealed at about the very spot where Angus presently came. Sweynie had taken a long chance in this, not being really sure of what the MacDubhas would decide upon, but being a shrewd warrior himself, he had counted upon their making the best possible move.

Now, when Angus and his men lay or sat down behind bushes and rocks there was not a sound for a long time; not so much as a twig stirred before the breath of their enemies who were all 'round about them and that was the most difficult thing they counted, that they would ever have to do, for they were all full, lusty men, not given to caution.

Then, the men around the Sweynie felt him touch them and each man who felt his touch with the greatest care touched his fellow, and the captains, each as his group was ready, touched the nearest captain and soon the Sweynie felt the press of a hand which told him that all had received the signal.

Meanwhile, every man had noted carefully where the MacDubhas were concealed, and as the stars were very bright, although the moon had gone, it was not hard for their sharp eyes to know exactly what each rock and bush hid.

So that they arose as one man and fell, each one upon a man of the MacDubhas—only, there were two and sometimes three to one MacDubha, whose capture was the more easy in that these strangers, coming so unexpectedly out of the still night, made no effort to kill, but strove rather, to fill the mouths of the MacDubhas with the ends of their own plaids and to bind their arms to their sides with their own belts; and so well was it done that Angus succeeded in giving only one cry before he was silenced.

While this was going on, some ran forward along the path, but very quietly, to

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see if the sentries had heard aught, and the one they killed was the one sent to see what that one cry of Angus' could have been.

As soon as all the MacDubhas were helpless, their captors pulled and dragged and pushed them down the path to the shore, the Sweynie holding Angus and laughing ever and again as the other strove, pinioned as he was, to loose himself and scramble back up the path.

"Struggle all you please, my fine bird," the Viking sneered. "I have you now—ha, ha!—and I have also that bridling of yours—do you hear? And with you both I will do as pleases me."

It was only that morning that the Red One had determined to use the queen's island for his prisoners and this was due to the report of one of the men of the sea rover, who knew that coast well and had been on the island ere ever it was taken over by Kapultep and the Pictish Queen.

He had said that he knew many secret caverns in the rocks of the island, where any number of men might be walled up alive and not a cry from them ever be heard and this had appealed mightily to the Sweynie. For, as the time came that he knew the possession of Fedalm to be nearer to him, jealousy of the younger man in whose custody she had been for so long stirred in him, and he felt that to merely kill Angus would not satisfy him at all. But to wall him up alive—to leave him to die a loathsome death of famine and thirst and darkness, that would take away the rankling sting of bitter jealousy.

All this the great red giant poured into the ear of Angus as he dragged him along, nor could the boy even curse as the foul words were poured into his ear, for his mouth was surely bound and he was as helpless and as motionless as a sack of grain being taken to the mill.

THE entrance to the caverns on the island was most wonderfully concealed. Not even when the Sweynie stood before the rugged pile of low rocks could he understand how any man could find so much as a crack in them, but the fellow who was the guide, stooping and crawling, showed him that two big stones inclined toward each other, could be spread apart by the pressure of a hand.

"But once inside, there is no such thing as moving them," he said. "'Tis some contrivance of the dark gods, no doubt, and those who are shut in here shall see them, perchance, as they come to receive the spirit from the body."

He glanced maliciously at Angus as he spoke, thinking to see him affrighted, but the stern blue eyes in the head of Angus MacDubha had never flashed with such hero's fire as at that moment, for his spirit was not daunted, but rather was it filled with a searing flame of noble rage. And so great was his fury that he succeeded in biting clear through the cloth which had silenced him; so that, although his voice was muffled, his startled captors could distinguish what he said:

"Think not that the gods will fail to visit their vengeance upon a warrior who so befouls his honor and his sword's bright blade! Though you send me and these my kinsmen to a death of horror, though you lay profane hands upon her who is wedded to my spirit as to my body, aye, though of the MacDubhas you leave not one alive, yet this I tell you, O unworthy son of Thor—you shall die by a hand you thought too weak to strike a blow and you shall go down to the dark gods, knowing that you have missed all that this life has to offer an honorable man and that you are as surely passing on to another in which the memory of your evil deeds shall follow you."

Not a hand was raised to Angus as he spoke, for there was that in his voice which awed even the boisterous outlaws who stood about him and for a moment after he had ceased the Sweynie, himself, looking down into the deep eyes of Angus had a strange desire to loose him, to clasp his hand and to beg for forgiveness of his wrongs against his house.

But as swiftly as it came, that moment passed. The Sweynie threw up his great head and laughed.

"Hear, O Gods!" he cried, shaking his sword aloft. "Hear the words of Angus MacDubha who speaks of thy good pleasure! Is't not a good jest? And what reward shall be given him? Is't not fitting that, being such a companion of thine, and so close in thy counsels, that he should go swiftly to thy domains?"

Now even the men of the Sweynie, used to his humors as they were, shuddered at this and Angus would have spoken again but the great hand of the Sweynie shut down upon his mouth and with a shout,

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the Red One pitched him head first through the opening in the rocks. At that the others shaking off their fears, threw in their other captives and then with a yell of victory, they clashed to the great stones, leaving Angus and his men imprisoned in utter darkness, their mouths stopped and their hands tied..

"There—my crowing cock!" the Sweynie cried, beating on the stones with his fists. "Stay there until thy bones rot, but take thy time in dying—take thy time!"

And then the Sweynie and all his people went away, nor did they hear so much as a rustle of a leaf as they went, nor was there a sound while they splashed through the shallow water on the sandbar and turned along the beach, but nevertheless there were many eyes watching them from the place which they had just left.

Tlaya and such of her Picts as were not dead had made straight for the island when they were driven away from the glen below the dun of the MacDubha. The queen, checking her wild horses after a time, had waited until the men who ran behind them could come up to her and then, seeing that there was no immediate pursuit, she had had the horses loosed and turned adrift, had hidden the chariot in the bushes beside the road and had hurried over to the island to acquaint Kapultep with this astounding reverse in their fortunes.

Kapultep had represented to Tlaya that it was necessary for him to perform incantations, during the attack on the dun, so that success might attend it, and therefore he had gone to the island while the queen and her force passed on to the fight. Tlaya in her heart, knew that the priest acted so because he was a coward, but she had in her that superstitious streak which ran through all the Picts as well.

Therefore she had seemed to accept the statement of the Druid in good part, and if she had succeeded she would have really believed that she owed it to his influence with the gods. But, having failed, and that most mysteriously and disastrously, she burst in upon the smirking Kapultep with such an outpouring of invective and denunciation and vituperation and royal rage that the stunned priest, used as he was to her, could do nothing but back against the altar and stare.

And in fact, Tlaya was all but mad, else would even she, arrogant as she was, never have dared to so raise her voice in the sacred chamber.

It was a vast, dim place, scantily lit by the fire which glowed upon the altar, and by a great torch which sent up clouds of bluish-green flame. A large bronze shield hung over the altar and the smoke from the fire continually traced strange patterns on its burnished surface. The floor was of rock, and so were the walls which jutted away here and there into dark recesses. Back of those recesses were other entrances, leading to the sacred chamber from many rooms and passages beyond, which wound in and out of the rocky formation of the island, but immense stones were rolled against those entrances, which could be pushed away only from without.

For it was here that Tlaya and Kapultep sometimes left a victim to die, by such awful means as was but hinted at with hushed voices even among the Norsemen, for neither they nor the Picts, nor the men of Ierna nor any of the Northern races had ever seen a snake, save the great pythons which the Druids used in their weird ceremonies. And those snakes they caused to be brought secretly from far Southern parts of the world, and trained to obey them; so that the priests might even hold aloft the great coils while the worshipers cowered upon their knees, but any other the beast would batter to death with its hard head and then crush and devour. That those who had thus perished had not been few was shown by the pile of skulls at the foot of the altar, arranged in the basket of ceremonial hazel withes.

Never had aught but voices raised in the service of the gods been heard in that dim place; never had any entered it erect save only Kapultep and his priests—the Picts, cowering outside the entrance, shuddered with fear as they heard their impious queen shouting her fury within its walls.

"Peace, peace, peace, woman!" the priest said at last. "Fear you not the wrath of the gods?"

"Ha! And what have the gods done for me that I should render them homage?" Tlaya retorted furiously. "Ha! The gods! And thee! Better had I paid heed to the eyes of the young MacDubha, which scorned thee and proclaimed thy pretensions false, as he sat at my feet!"

"Woman—have a care!" Kapultep snarled, but the queen cast shrill, defying laughter in his face.

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"Nay, nay, Priest!" she mocked. "I fear you not. So try not those tricks again with me. But, if you would keep your head on your shoulders, put your shrewd wits to work. If by any shift we can seek out these men of MacDubha and destroy them I will even raise your power in my kingdom—but let there be no more talk of thee or thy gods till 'tis done!"

Now Kapultep, for all his fury at being thus made of little moment, was aware from somewhat the queen had revealed in her raving that serious disaster had overtaken the expedition and it was not long before he had extracted from her as full an account as she could give of what had happened.

"No doubt the MacDubhas found out in some manner our plans," the priest mused.

"May the dark gods smite them!" the queen said, gnashing her teeth. "And what is to be done now?"

"There is just one thing to do," Kapultep replied firmly. "Tomorrow morning send for the Sweynie and tell him that a loyal Norseman of yours told you that one of the MacDubhas told him that the Sweynie was a prisoner in the dun, having been taken by a trick. You, as his good friend, took your Picts whom you could trust, and went to the glen below the dun, thinking to effect a rescue, but were yourselves set upon and grievously worsted, but not before the MacDubha had taunted you with being drawn to your defeat by an idle tale.

"In this manner will you increase the friendship of the Sweynie. Then do you agree that the time for the attack on the MacDubha has come, and do you also reveal to your Norsemen that the princess is held against her will in their dun. Some of them at least, will believe it. With their help and with the Sweynie and his men——"

NOW at this point one of the Picts ventured to the low, rock-hewn door of the chamber, and the queen, seeing him there, knew that something of importance must have happened.

So she and the priest went to him and, looking out, they were amazed to see the very man upon whose help they were counting walking at a distance, with a muffled figure, whose identity would have been hidden, but for his plaid.

"By the gods," Tlaya exclaimed in a whisper, "what means this?"

Behind the Sweynie came his men, leading, forcing and dragging other bound men, who struggled, despite their helplessness to resist their fate.

The Picts had already hidden themselves among the rocks. The queen and the priest, after the procession had passed beyond the half-concealed entrance to the chamber, slipped out, holding themselves in the black shadows cast by the trees and bushes and big stones, until they saw where the Sweynie threw their prisoners. Also, they heard what Angus said and the Sweynie's reply and words which passed between the men as they marched away, and they remained, staring darkly at each other, dumfounded with the occurrences of the night.

"Saw you ever the like of this?" Tlaya demanded, drawing a long breath. "In the name of the gods what is to do now? Whichever way the thing turns, I and my kingdom are in dire peril. For the Sweynie's men, it must have been, which drove mine from the glen and therefore he must know that I have tricked him. Now that so many of the MacDubhas are cast into this living death, he will not be long in entering the dun and in finishing those who remain."

"Then he will place himself and Fedalm on your throne, call your Norsemen, who will assuredly follow the girl, and have us thrown to the javelins of his men from the top of your wall," Kapultep replied, his shaking hand at his lip.

Wild-eyed as the queen was, she spared a breath to sneer at the priest.

"Aye, slaver, Priest! Little good do thy gods do thee now. Where are your wits, man? Where is that cunning which you have pitted against me for many years? Here are perilous times. Think not that you may win to safety without me, for the MacDubhas, who are of the Druidic faith, will soon all be dead and the Norsemen, who love Thor and Woden, care little for such priests as thee."

The Picts, creeping from their hiding-places, peered fearfully at the figures of the two, for the place where they stood was the dreaded death place. Tlaya and Kapultep, absorbed in their terrified conference, knew not that they had come to stand before those two rocks which guarded the dark pit in which lay the moldering bones of many a one who had incurred the queen's displeasure. But as they desperately fought for what to do to save themselves

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and the kingdom, they cast their eyes upon those stones and a thought was thereby forced upon them.

"The MacDubha—" they both began to say, at the same moment.

"Aye, Priest, there lies the path," Tlaya exclaimed triumphantly, "for if we release these within they will surely unite against the Sweynie with us."

"We will promise them peace," the priest assented, his eyes glowing, "but they will be much depleted——"

"Nay, you will practise no deviltry on them!" Tlaya retorted with anger. "Had I made friends with them when first they came, as I had a mind to do, this Sweynie would not have dared land on my coast, Angus would have wedded Fedalm and while I would have lost some of my power, I would not now be abroad in my land, hunted and with none but a priest to counsel me. Besides, my Norsemen will gladly fight under them——"

"Think not to take the girl from me, Tlaya," the priest said in a low and menacing tone, "otherwise will I see that your plans come to naught! Aye, though I court death in the doing."

For answer, the queen sneered, turned her back upon the priest and walked the two paces which lay between her and the two rocks. And as she put her hand upon them and as they swung slowly open and while there came a shout from within, the priest, crouching, suddenly leaped upon Tlaya of the Picts and drove his dagger deep within her body so that her heart was transfixed and she fell without a murmur as her spirit passed.

And her beautiful body fell across the opening between the rocks and the long mane of her dark hair streamed far forward over her head, so that Kapultep, trying desperately to drag her away and to pull back her heavy hair, so that he could again push the rocks together, was just one fatal moment too late.

In that moment Angus MacDubha and some of his men sprang out and the old priest, as quick as a fox, bent his lean body and leaped away, twisting and dodging so that, though they searched for him, he left not so much as a footprint behind.

"Nay, nay, waste no more time hunting the old demon," Angus cried to them, "but come hither that we may plan what is to be done now. Take this dead queen and place her within the dark cavern where she has sent so many men before ever they were dead, and roll together the stones that none may know where lies her body. As for the priest, the dark gods also will call him. Let him go. The bright gods favor us this night and will lead us on to victory, else would I not have been able to bite through that thick belt of mine and so release myself and all of you from our bonds."

Now the Picts, seeing that the men who had been thrown into the death place came out alive and that their queen was dead and their priest flown, crept forward from their hiding-place and cried upon Angus—

"Master—master—kill us not, but take us to be your men."

And hastily Angus accepted them, commanding them to form behind his clansmen, for they could see that a large force of men were coming swiftly across the sandbar, which was now more awash, but ere they could advance they heard the voice of Seumas, shouting his brother's name.

XVII

THE Sweynie and his men, going from the Island of the Mystic Shield, upon which, as they thought, they had left Angus and his men to die a fearful death, met with the men who had routed Tlaya from the glen, and passed silently to the right on the beach. When they were below the MacDubhas' dun they paused for such instruction as their chief would give them.

"This is a path which a Pict of the queen's told me of," he whispered, "and by it we may ascend to within a few feet of the gate of the dun, where there is shrubbery in which we may hide. And when you see me stand up, do all of you leap up, and throw javelins at the watchers on the walls, and thereupon we will scale the walls as is our custom."

In truth, the Norsemen, being so tall, and having great strength, were often able to assault a place by that method, which they well knew how to use; and, in their hands, it was a far less hazardous undertaking than it seemed.

So the Sweynie and his party—which was now a great, strong one, for he had all his force with him, so that they were put to it to find shelter in the shadow of the bluff, and covered their weapons and

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even their faces in fear of being seen by some chance pair of keen eyes—they fairly lined the steep path up the hillside, at the top of which the chief and many of his picked men lay.

But although they waited, they did not hear a sound above them; and after a time a whisper was passed from one captain to another that they were to hold themselves in readiness for a swift assault, since there was the tramp of marching men to be heard coming toward the dun, the meaning whereof had caused the chief much astonishment, for he knew of no force save his own which would be abroad; Angus being safe on the island and Seumas undoubtedly within the dun.

So that when Eric and his men paused on the bluff-top to talk with Muirdach, every word they said was heard by the Sweynie, and when they passed down the path it was only by a miracle that some of them did not stumble over Sweynie's men, who, standing beside trees, and crouched under bushes and beside rocks, and sprawled in the scant shade of low ferns and brambles, scarcely dared breathe lest they be discovered. And many of their captains marveled that there was no shout from above ordering them to attack as Tlaya's Norsemen passed between them.

But Sweynie, quickly reforming his plan as he saw things turning out differently, decided to let Eric escape, for the moment, so as to the more surely get into the dun. Once there, he meant to seize Fedalm, to fire the place and to race along the bluff-top to the Pictish Queen's fortress, where he was sure of at once gaining admittance. With the Norsemen turned against her, and many of her Picts dead, and with herself but just arrived from peril of her life, she would be in a fit frame of mind to accept as an ally the man who returned her daughter and pledged his support of her throne.

So having heard as well that Seumas was gone to the island, and sure that he and Eric would be mystified by not finding Angus, Sweynie coolly waited, silent, while Muirdach and his men stood watching Eric's party pass across the sandbar. And then, as the gate was swung wide open, and as Muirdach turned his back toward the spot where Sweynie crouched, the giant Norseman, with a shout, flung himself forward, clutching the neck of the MacDubha, while his men did the same for all those who stood without the gate.

The roar which burst from the old warder in the moment that he perceived the attack—for he had been standing almost outside the walls—brought every man within the dun to his feet, but it availed little, for the men from the path below poured up, and the Sweynie, using Muirdach as a battering ram and a bodyguard, pressed on in front, and while the men of the MacDubha had no more than leaped downward toward the gate, all of the Sweynie's men had gotten within.

Now the MacDubha men plunged into the fight with great cries and with shouts, but they were amazed that the others fought almost without a sound. So, missing the clamor of battle without which they had never waged a fight before, and having no leaders, for Muirdach had been tossed into a corner of the inner gateway with a great sword thrust through his body, they fell silent also, and this was the thing on which the Norse chieftain had counted, for he did not want to draw Seumas and Eric back too soon by the sounds of battle—sounds which they were sure to hear did it last more than a few minutes.

Therefore he had cautioned his men on no account to make any more noise than they could help; and now, with clenched teeth and low mutterings and bitter, savage, almost whispered curses the Sweynie's band and the men of Dubhross set hand against hand.

And lurching, pushing, thrusting, the Norsemen won, foot by foot, until the last of them was able to turn and shut and bar the great gate that any who came to rescue might be halted at least for a time.

Now Fedalm had been in the hall with the leech when the noise of the tumult broke upon their ears, and for a brief moment they believed that it was Seumas returning with his brother.

But Fedalm's women, some of whom had been without, came rushing in then, throwing themselves at her feet, and wringing their hands, and the girl looked at the leech and stood up.

" 'Tis the Red One, my father," she said, "and he has gained entrance, while Seumas and Angus are trapped somewhere by that evil Pictish woman. It is for me that the Sweynie has come. I have feared it since ever I last looked upon him, for

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I read in his face that he would have held me. Oh, well did Seumas to show me the secret room in the walls, my father! For I will go there, and if I hear that I am in danger of being found——"

She felt at her bosom where the knife which Eric had given her should have been, and then she remembered that she had but that day given it to the armorer, who was to make a little sheath for it, since Angus feared that the sharp point of it might prick her.

Then only, and for a moment, did panic fall upon Fedalm for to wield a sword was beyond her strength, and of short daggers there were none to her hand, and then she smiled strangely, the leech thought, and her hand went to a carven box which stood near, where some quaint pieces of jewelry of the MacDubha house were kept.

When Angus had brought her to his home out of the arms of Kapultep and the Sweynie, she had torn the brooch of Tlaya from her robe and thrown it on the floor. And then, as it was so rare a piece of work, Angus, when he arrived, had put it away with the other things of the like nature which had been in the possession of the clan for long times before.

The leech could not understand why Fedalm smiled as she drew out the big jewel with the long, strong bodkin by which it might be thrust through fold after fold of cloth, but when he saw her bend the point thoughtfully ere she pinned it in her robe, he also smiled.

And then, catching up a sword from the floor, an old one, thrown down in exchange for a better by one of the men who had run out at the first cry of danger, the old man stationed himself at the door of the hall that he might sell his life as dearly as he could for the safety of his mistress.

Fedalm looked down pityingly upon her women, who shivered and trembled as the ominous, smothered cries of the attack came nearer and nearer, and although she knew that death was there, if not worse, she tried to smile bravely upon them, reminding herself that her father had told many tales of kings and kings' children who had died as bravely, as nobly as they had lived.

"Look you, my girls," she said, kindly, "soon there will be bitter work here. Do you go behind the fireplace and move that which seems to be a little shelf, and you will find refuge. In time your lords will return and so may you escape that which I would not should fall upon any of you. Without the hall there are many women, alas, whom I can not save."

"But you, sweet mistress—" they cried, but even as they did so they heard a woman's scream, piercing all the tramping and muttering sounds which now compassed the hall, and with one accord they fled to the fireplace.

Now, alone, Fedalm remained standing by the chair which the brothers had caused to be made for her. One white hand she pressed against the brooch and the other gripped the chair, steadying herself, for though her soul stood undaunted, her woman's heart faltered, hearing death-cries, the clash of weapons and the thick shouts of the wounded who still fought.

The leech looked back at her, his old face alight.

"Get you to the shelter," he shouted, "they come!"

And then she saw at the very door a sword whirled sloft and come down upon the aged hand and arm which so valiantly had been upflung, and another sword, sweeping by, as if in a backward swing from some other blow clove the white head from the body.

A ROAR, shouts, growing louder, more exultant! Fedalm, as still as the chair on which she leaned, knew not whether her friends or her foes thus cried, until of a sudden the bellow of the Sweynie broke out, and the Red One, streaming with blood, his garments torn and the froth of battle on his beard, burst in at the door, and all his men streamed in behind him, dragging with them MacDubhas who were wounded.

The hot smell of the sweat of the men whose bodies reeked with their toil, and whose blood ran upon the floor so that others slipped in it smote the girl as if one had struck her a blow between the eyes, and in that moment the Sweynie leaped, almost, it seemed, from door to chair and caught her in his arms and tore her hand from her bosom, and with it the brooch.

And Fedalm, child of many warriors of the past, struck with all her might upon the face, the loathsome face, fixed in the glare of murderous joy, which bent above her, and she twisted her hands in the great beard

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to thrust away from her the lips which were to her worse than a serpent's fangs, but the Sweynie but laughed the louder, pressing her small head with its mantle of glorious hair, back into the hollow of his arm.

"Ha, ha, my fair woman," he said, "at last we meet again. What—hast no welcome for me? The last time these arms pressed thee 'twas not so you did. But think not that 'tis your choice this night, for even now beneath the stars does the MacDubha lie stark, and your Angus I have buried alive, there to repent him of having dared touch that which I desired."

At that Fedalm cried out so piercingly that the men of MacDubha held captives by the Sweynie's men could not repress the groan which burst from them, whereat the Sweynie's men laughed, as did their chief.

"Aye, the hearts of you shall be crushed and your lives taken, and your women——"

The Sweynie paused to look around upon his men who answered him—

"Ah-h-h," they breathed out, for of women they had been bereft for long, and the MacDubha men who heard that sound were so infuriated that, captives as they were, and many of them dying, they threw themselves so fiercely upon those who held them that they all but beat the others back.

And all the time that that sharp, short struggle went on the princess fought in the arms of the Red One until he, giant that he was, looked at her in surprise.

"In truth, Princess," he said, "I promise me that in time we shall be good friends, for never have I seen a maid of such spirit as you. Cease—cease, you but hurt yourself. Hark while I tell thee somewhat. I am taking thee in a rude fashion, but I swear that I will be faithful to thee and treat thee with all honor and that I will wed thee according to our gods!"

"Sooner would I wed with the great serpent which dwells behind the altar on the queen's island!" Fedalm made answer. "And as long as there is breath in me will I seek to take your life, murderer that you are!"

And at that Red Sweynie bound her mouth with his scarf and tied her hands.

"So, beauteous one," he said, "will you remain until I have more time to convert your hard heart. But of one thing be assured, that I fear not for my life from a hand too weak to strike a blow——"

Fedalm, almost to swooning, was, nevertheless, not without astonishment at the sudden change which passed over his face as thus he spoke; he stood still holding her, but looking afar, as if he beheld a spirit. In truth, it was little else, for as clearly, amidst that wild scene as though it were whispered in his ear, he heard the voice of Angus saying that he would be struck down by a weak hand and would go down to death.

"By Thor's hammer," he cried, suddenly rousing himself and shouting savagely, "do we remain here all night like a lot of talking women? It has seemed but a moment since we entered the dun of the MacDubhas, but already without the door I see the first creeping of the dawn. 'Tis time that we should proceed upon our victorious way."

"Drive out the cattle from their sheds so that they will seek their accustomed grazing places. They are not many, but 'tis senseless to lose them. Tie the women and bring them, also such of the MacDubhas as are alive. It will be good pleasure when our battles are over to use them as slaves. Take all of treasure that you see and set the torch to the dun."

"O Gods of my fathers!" Fedalm moaned. "Oh, that I might even now be pressing the cold earth, as cold even as are my lord and my brother!"

"Nay, sweet woman," Sweynie said, as he pulled the scarf about her mouth still tighter, so that no sound could come from her lips, "a fairer fortune than that awaits you in these arms, most loved, than which none have ever held you so strongly."

So down the steep liss to the gate the conqueror swaggered, his red sword in one hand and Fedalm held upon his other arm. Muirdach, all but dead by the gate, saw the awful sight, and with all the life that he had left he grasped at the feet of the Viking, thinking to pull him to the ground and to drive his dagger into Fedalm's heart, so saving her from rapine, but the Sweynie no more than stumbled, and when he righted himself Muirdach was dead with the name of Seumas on his lips.

And they passed out from the gate, and fire sprang up from behind them, and groans and shrieks went with them from those whom they were carrying away from their home and their dead, but Fedalm lay quiet upon the great shoulder of the

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Viking, for she had swooned away. And the Red One, striding along at the head of his horde, as they turned them along the cliff-top going toward Tlaya's fortress, felt within him much that he could not understand.

He repented not of the slaughter he had wrought, nor of any evil he had ever done, but he wished with all his heart that he could forget the other times in which he had so strode away, leaving ruin and death behind him, and with a fair maid on his arm, ravished from those who loved her.

The sweet air of early dawn blew across his heated face, and he looked down upon Fedalm with strange thoughts. What if, on such an hour, he might have had such a one beside him, not a fainting, woful burden, but one who looked into his eyes with such a look of trust and faith as once before, in the mists of morning, Fedalm had lifted to him? Would it not be better than—"all that an honorable man—" the words seemed to be whispered in his ear, again in the voice of Angus, and the Sweynie frowned so that his men looked at him in wonder for he was wont to be in a gay humor after a battle.

But soon they thought they knew what had occasioned his frown, for far in advance of them, on the path, there were men. They were hiding all that they could, but the undergrowth was too thin to afford them much shelter. No doubt, the Viking thought, it was Seumas with the men who had left the dun with him, and he was not dismayed, for he knew that he had with him many more men than the MacDubha.

"Some of you drop out through the trees above the path," he said to his captains, "and come behind the MacDubha men while we attack them in front, for they have come up the path of the bluff where we took the younger and his men down to death. As for the women and the captives some must stay here with them until their kinsmen be vanquished."

Now the first rays of the rising sun struck the earth as the Red Sweynie spoke and he and his men, having their backs to the light, could see far, and that which their eyes beheld they could not at first believe, for among the figures which lined the path and were massed in the trees above it, and clung to the cliffside and were strung out far beyond the point where the path on the cliff and the path up the bluff-side met—were men without number and among them, known to them all, were Angus and the men whom they had left in that sure cavern in the rocks for dead.

"By the gods!" the Sweynie cried, and so, for a breathing space, the two parties halted, no man among them making a sound, and the captives in the rear knowing naught of the near presence of their kinsmen.

The deep dread which had lain on the Viking since Angus had uttered those strange words upon the island laid hold upon him again, but only for a moment. The next, his thoughts had swept backward and forward over every possibility, for he was sure that he saw Tlaya's Norsemen and some of her Picts among the figures which every moment were becoming more distinct.

No refuge, then, in the Pictish fortress, nor possibility of winning through to it if there were. No refuge behind; his own hand had destroyed that; no refuge from all this great band in his own rough camp; no time to reach his galleys moored in the far bay—but one place—the island, with its many caves, from which a band of desperate men might fight for long.

"To me!" he shouted, pointing down the sheer cliffside, and with Fedalm and his sword clasped tight together he flung himself over.

Now the deed was that of a madman, even for those wild times, and for an instant his men hesitated, but their captains, trained to obey the Sweynie in all things, also set an example, and so all the horde, falling, rolling, slipping, some dashing to death on the beach road below, some finding a rough footage in the stunted trees and great stones which projected from the ground, plunged over after their chief, leaving behind their captives.

In truth, it was the only thing to do, for so hot were the flames from the burning dun that it would have been impossible to go down by the path which led from its gate, even had the MacDubhas not overtaken them and forced a fatal fight upon them there in that narrow place. As it was, the Sweynie did a deed that day which was a legend for many a year after.

Burdened with the princess, and with his own great weight, and with the weakness of many small wounds draining his blood, loaded with his great sword as well, yet

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he reached the beach before any of his men with no more than a scratch across one cheek to show for what he had done, and without taking breath he ran with great strides for the sandbar, for already the MacDubhas were streaming down the path of the cliffside to cut off his escape.

XVIII

THE Sweynie had no more than made his first wild plunge down the cliffside when Seumas and Angus and all their followers, with a yell of defiance, poured themselves down the path by which they had come, while the little Picts, as lithe as eels, simply threw themselves upon their backs and slid, but try as they would, the Viking and most of his band had dashed through the rising water and gained the island before any of their pursuers were near enough to so much as throw javelins after them.

Then, crying aloud the battle-cry of the MacDubha, while Fedalm's Norsemen shouted her name, and the Picts shrilled their strange, unintelligible plaint, which they used indiscriminately for all occasions, they all followed madly after the great, bronze-haired man who carried the soft bundle upon which all of their eyes were fastened.

As for Angus and Seumas, they would have far outrun their followers save for one thing—they did not want the Sweynie to think himself caught while he had the girl in his arms, for if he did it was within the bounds of possibility that he would sink his dagger in her breast ere they could prevent him. But if he were allowed time they were sure that he would put her down in some safe place before he turned to fight.

And this, in fact, he did. Running with all his might, he disappeared behind one of the great rocks, while his followers turned to meet the onslaught.

"Now, by the gods, will we avenge all those whose blood this wolf has spilt!" Seumas said, as he and Angus separated, each taking the head of one of the two divisions into which the attacking body was roughly molded.

For answer, Angus turned to his men with a great shout—

"For the women of ours!"

"For the women of ours!" was the roar which was returned, given with such fierceness, and accompanied by such stamping of feet and shaking of weapons aloft that the very earth of the island trembled.

Now the cutthroats who composed at least a third of the Sweynie's party looked askance at each other as they began to see with what manner of men they had to fight, for they were used to desperate affrays and to sudden cruel battles, and to terrifying country folk, but none of them had ever stood up to such seasoned warriors as these, nor any of such noble bearing.

"In truth, I like this not over well," one of them, a sort of leader among them, muttered to those about him.

Nevertheless, they saw that fight they must, for their pursuers were steadily forcing them toward the smaller end of the island, where the only escape was in the sea. One or two of their number, the hardiest of all, had crept off to the side and had endeavored to engage some one of the men on their side lines in single combat, but in each case some Norseman had come to his comrade's aid, and the two, almost without slackening their steady forward march, had coolly, even contemptuously, plunged their daggers in the throat of him who had thought to do the like to them.

Meanwhile, following a shouted direction from the Sweynie, his band threw an occasional javelin, brandished swords, went backward as little as they could—in short, retreated, slowing up the advance of their enemy, so that their chief would be able to secure the princess before he came back to fight. They all understood that the possession of the girl was their strongest point, especially if she could be hidden in some of the caves where she would not easily be found, for in case that they were beaten, they might then make a bargain for themselves, by promising to restore her.

Now, as they gained a certain place, the Sweynie's captains gave the signal to halt and to give battle, for they had seen their chief running back to them alone.

Angus and Seumas, also, saw that the Sweynie came now to the fight, and that Fedalm was no longer in danger of being hurt by anything that they might do, so that, with one voice, they shouted a command, and a flight of javelins sped upon their path of death. Many of the Sweynie's party were struck by them, and some fell, pierced with them and in great agony, but of these their comrades took no note.

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Swinging their swords, their faces pale with the knowledge that it was a fight to the death, they rushed forward, hoping to overthrow some, at least, of the opposing force by the shock of their impact.

But the MacDubhas and Fedalm's Norsemen were strong men, and they were led by two warriors who held their confidence and their love; moreover, not a man among them but whose heart burned with righteous rage for the shameful fate of the sweet daughter of the Dubha, and for bitter fear that the royal Fedalm might share that woful plight. Even the cowardly little Picts, too small to stand up against the fighting at its worst, hovered close on the flanks, determined to acquit themselves like men, whenever they might so do.

So, as shield struck upon shield, and as swords clashed, and the great bodies strained, one against the other, the Norsemen who stood with the MacDubhas laughed with the joy of battle, and the MacDubhas as was their custom, smiled, and this habit of theirs, of smiling as they fought, was new to the cutthroats with the Sweynie, and it terrified them beyond measure, for never had they seen the like before, being accustomed to men who cursed and uttered foul words as they struck.

Now the Sweynie, knowing that there would never be another day for him, did he not dispose of the MacDubhas and that right quickly, for their men outnumbered his, clove a way through the press to where Seumas stood, fighting among his men. Gladly would the Sweynie have killed Angus first, for beyond all other cause of rage did he hate him for that he had had possession of Fedalm, but lost as he was, in many ways, to the honor of a warrior, he knew that it behooved him to accord the elder brother the first combat.

Those who saw the Viking rushing on toward Seumas at once engaged him, for they knew that the MacDubha was still weak from the great wound in his right arm which he had received from Sweynie before. But Seumas, forgetting that his shoulder was still stiff and not entirely healed, thrust aside those who would have stood between him and the despoiler of his sister, and so again the two stood face to face.

"'Tis in my mind that now you pay the dark gods their debt, O killer of fair women," Seumas said.

"Nay!" answered the Viking. "They will spare me yet, for that I may gather the sweetness of another, the fairest of all!"

Now at that the fighting smile which lay upon the lips of Seumas deepened, so that he seemed almost to laugh, but the Sweynie knew the MacDubha face well, and he struck, instantly, with all his might, knowing that naught but black rage had brought that change to it. But swift as he was, the arm of Seumas, with the great sword held in it, all but pierced his heart, for the MacDubha, forgetting that he had planned to fight warily and so tire out the Viking, had put all of his knowledge and power in that great thrust.

NOW Angus would have gone to the help of his brother, for he knew well that Seumas, while healed of his wound, was yet not sure of his fighting arm, but the captain of the cutthroats, seeing that it was such a desperate case, had undertaken to draw swords with the younger of his opponents, and Angus, although much the better man, could not at once deliver the final blow, for the cutthroat fought like a demon.

And Seumas and the Sweynie grappled, while such of their men as could get near them fought among themselves. And of dying men soon there were many strewn upon the ground, for there was no mercy given or asked, and every man strove to kill his adversary as quickly as he might, since there could be no surrender.

And the cutthroats, seeing that their captain was now bleeding from a great wound in the thigh which Angus had given him, pressed in upon those two.

And as the Sweynie fought, he did as he was wont to do, which was to bellow with each blow, and his fellows shouted to him in answer, but the Norsemen of Fedalm and the MacDubhas fought with clenched teeth, and that so bitterly and with such disregard of danger to themselves that it was as if the bright gods upheld their arms. And as the sun rose, hot and clear, the flashing of the many great swords, and the red locks of the Norsemen and of the Viking's men made such a play of light that the Picts were fairly blinded by it.

Yet they did right well acquit themselves, for even they had been won to loyalty and courage by their love of the beauteous young princess.

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The Sweynie knew naught of the battle as it raged around him, save that the shouts of his men came less often, for Seumas pressed him hard, and twice all but gave him a fatal stroke. Nor could any of the men of the two warriors come near to help them for the incessant swinging of their swords, which threatened the heads of any who approached.

But the Sweynie felt that the arm of Seumas weakened, for the wound broke out afresh, and poured blood down his arm, so that his grip on the sword was less secure, and suddenly, as a faintness struck him, the Viking upraised his sword and would assuredly have finished him, had not many of the MacDubhas, risking instant death, rushed upon the giant. As it was Seumas fell to the ground, all but dead, it seemed, and his men, madly beating down the thirsty sword which sought to finish the work, dragged him away, out of the press, and confided him to some of the Picts, who were but slightly wounded; and then they plunged again into the fight, for the Sweynie, uninjured, had turned to Angus.

Now as Angus saw his enemy come roaring toward him, he knew that Seumas must be down, and the hero's rage came on him in such might that he killed the captain of the cutthroats with one blow, and dragging out his sword from the man's body, he waved it aloft and leaped toward the Viking.

Now, indeed, did the Sweynie set himself to do all that lay in him, for Angus was, at that moment, more than a man; and the strength of his youth was in him. And when he fell upon the Sweynie and the Sweynie fell upon him, they shook the ground with the fury of their meeting.

Now some of the Norsemen drove the Viking's men, and the Picts, marvelously sharp of eye and quick of hand, darted here and there, finishing with their daggers and javelins such work as their stronger comrades had begun, and so the Sweynie's men began to give ground. But the Sweynie, himself, saw naught, for he fought, eye sunk in eye, hand against hand, foot against foot, with the young warrior who pressed him—until, as they both drew away from each other a moment, he dashed the sweat and blood from his eyes and saw that the day was lost, for him!

For of his men more than half lay on the ground, and of those who still fought, many were wounded, and of the cutthroats, the lesser cowards were running toward the edge of the island: to jump into the sea, hoping to swim to the mainland.

And with an oath which blasted the air, so evil it was, the Sweynie made so violent a lunge at Angus that he pierced his arm, so that the sword dropped, and in that instant the Viking gave one great leap and bounded away.

Bent over, to escape the javelins which were thrown after him, he sped like a deer around the far end of those who still fought, and though many tried to stay him, none there were who could, and he sprang behind a great rock.

"Wait—wait, O my men!" Angus shouted, for it was in his mind that the Viking would spring out from that shelter and strike down, those lesser warriors who were dashing toward it, and so there was a second's pause, while Angus ran up, and then one little pause more, as he stopped to recover himself a little, for the last blow he had received was a heavy one.

And then, with a shout he and many of his men sprang around the rock, and there they stood, in astonishment, for not a sign of him they sought could they see!

Nor, though men ran to and fro, throughout that part of the island, could they find a trace of him, and Angus ran from one spot to another like one whom the gods had stricken, for he knew that wherever the Viking was, there also was Fedalm, and he began to fear that she and her abductor were both in the sea; for, the only possible thing that could have happened seemed to be that the Sweynie, running to where he had the girl, had snatched her and, getting to the high place at the extreme end, had leaped into the water with her.

Those of Fedalm's Norsemen who were among the searchers were of great assistance, for they knew somewhat of the hidden chambers in the depths of the rocks, but though they explored many, not so much as a footprint on the chalky floors could they find.

And of the Sweynie's horde, which that morning had been so numerous, and so lusty with triumph and full of loot, there were few left alive, and many of those were sorely wounded, for the loss of the princess had so inflamed those who sought to save her that even such scant mercy as the Norsemen were apt to show was lacking.

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And at last, so beaten down with anguish that he felt like to die, Angus turned from his frantic search for Fedalm, and he longed for the wise advice of his brother, and tears fell from his eyes for Seumas.

But when he returned to that open place where the greatest part of the fight had been he saw that Seumas was sitting up, supported by his shield-bearer, and Angus ran toward him and fell on his knees beside him.

"O my brother!" he cried, and was not ashamed that Seumas and the warriors which stood about should see him weep. "Alive are you! I thought you surely gone to the gods!"

"In truth, I was near to it," Seumas replied, "but only from loss of blood from my old wound. And now that that is stopped I shall soon be strong. How fares it with us, Angus? For these my men say that the Sweynie and his band are vanquished, but they will not say where is the princess."

So then, with bitter, wild words, Angus told the MacDubha how all things had fallen out, but when he had said that Fedalm was missing, also, Seumas staggered to his feet, nor could they stay him. He shook off their hands.

"By the gods," he shouted, "if another seeks to hold me I will break in his skull! Angus—Angus—lose not a moment! That foul murderer has not chosen so clean a death for Fedalm as the sea—somewhere, among the rocks, he holds her! Thinking to take revenge of us upon her—see you not? Aye, now you will move! Send out men to every corner! Crawl between the rocks! Look—lose no moment, while that demon's hand may be touching our pure girl!"

Before Seumas had finished his words men were speeding everywhere to do his bidding, and Angus was crying curses upon himself that he had not seen how it was.

"And now," said Seumas, "do you take one side of the island, brother, and I will take the other, for our love will surely find her before these others, who are but her lovers from afar."

And in that moment Seumas troubled himself not to conceal the tale his eyes could tell, and Angus, looking within them, read them aright, and awe and pity were in his own as he said:

"Dearest brother, if goodness is rewarded by the gods, then will you be blessed. But stand not on your feet. You have not the strength."

"The gods have rewarded me in my brother and in his happiness," Seumas replied, "and as for strength, I would have enough to look for her had the gods of No Return already hold of my feet!"

FEDALM had watched the fight as much as she could, from behind the great rock where the Sweynie had deposited her. So instant had been his need, and so swift his pursuers, that he had had no time to say one word to her, save to threaten her, with a motion of his hand, as he bounded away.

And Fedalm, who had thought Seumas and Angus dead, was near to swooning when she saw them at the head of their men; and when she recognized her own Norsemen her heart sang within her, and the spirit of her fighting forebears longed to see the fight, though her woman's heart trembled. So, looking out, partly sheltered from any chance javelin, she cried aloud with joy when she saw the ranks of the Viking being cut down.

And then, even as she had all but made up her mind to run out, skirting the great mass of fighters, and try to win through to the place where her Norsemen or the MacDubhas could care for her, and while she gathered her robes in her hand, that she might be swift, even in that moment she saw the dreaded Viking break from the ranks of her lord's people and come charging through his own.

The deer knows when the dogs bay what they are about, though they be afar, and Fedalm doubted not for what purpose the Viking now bore down, at such a pace upon the spot where he had left her, and she turned and fled, thinking to find instant shelter in the caverns which she knew so well.

But the Sweynie, when he rounded the corner of the rock, saw her robes fluttering, as she disappeared beyond another, and he leaped after her. And so following he was in time to see her push her way between the crevices of some stones. He thereupon pushed his way, also, through them, and Fedalm heard him not until his feet rang in the rocky passage down which she ran. Then she would have returned, but it was

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too late, and she fled, again, thinking that she could lose her pursuer in the turnings and twistings of the cave into which her knowledge of the island had led her.

But the Sweynie followed fast, so that she thought but how to get out, again, into the air, where she might call for help. Now she knew that this passage in which she was, led, by one of its turnings, to the secret chamber behind the altar of the Mystic Shield, where Kapultep had made the brooch, and this was brought to her mind because, as she saw the Sweynie running toward her, she had noted that the brooch still glistened in his tunic, where he had fastened it when he struck it from her hand in the hall of the MacDubhas. There had it remained, during all the many savage blows which the Sweynie had given and received since that moment.

So Fedalm sped on, thinking to enter that chamber and so to get out into the chamber of the Sacred Shield, though of that moment when she must pass close to the rear of the altar she chose not to think, for dread of the evil beast whose lair it was.

There was a low stone door before her, half-open; to that she came, panting, and turned to push it shut on the smooth grooves in which it swung, but she was too late. The Red Sweynie caught her hand and so holding it, sprang into the room.

Both man and maid were wild-eyed, and the Sweynie ran with blood from head to foot, and there were wounds all over him, so that the light of madness lay in his eyes. For at last he knew that his course was run, and that the dark gods had laid hold upon him. Of his men none would be left alive, and for himself, death was so close that he could feel the cold breath of it. For that very reason, the passions of his body mounted, like a fever, and he clasped the trembling girl with such ferocity that naught but her warrior blood saved her from swooning.

"And now—Fedalm—" he gasped—"we meet again, fair woman, and we go to the Land of No Return together, for I swear that after I have held you in my arms a space, while those who seek me shall not find me, I shall press the life—so—from that white throat, upon which my lips have burned to lie, since ever I saw it."

Fedalm shrieked with all her might, but despair told her how useless it was. The room in which she was madly fighting off the gigantic man who played with her as a tiger with a thing it means to kill, was the artificing room of Kapultep. It was full of stone tables, and of strange instruments, and of vessels. There were but two doors—one from which she had come, and another, leading directly to that awful spot back of the altar.

There was no escape for Fedalm unless the gods should intervene, and to them she prayed, as she writhed in the Viking's arms, for of mortal help there was none. No sound could reach the ear of the men who would have died to save her—Fedalm closed her mouth fiercely to the kisses which sought it, but in her soul she cried their loved names—Angus and Seumas—Angus and Seumas!

And then the voice of Seumas came to her shouting her name, and the door through which she had come was pushed aside and Seumas, himself, leaped into the dim room, lighted, in some strange, unearthly fashion, from the roof.

A moment he stood, and the Sweynie put Fedalm from him and reached for his sword.

"Seumas, O Seumas!" Fedalm cried. "How was it that you found me?"

"Think you I would let this demon touch you, Fedalm?" Seumas said, as he shifted his sword in his hand. "Not so."

But the Sweynie laughed.

"Naught but meat for my sword are you, MacDubha!" he taunted. "And when my sword has eaten I, myself, will return me to the fair meal which now I put by but for the pleasure of my sword."

Before he had finished speaking, Seumas' sword struck him, and bore him backward and the Sweynie, brandishing his own sword, yet staggered, so that Fedalm thought him all but finished. But his glance at her revived in him the lust for her, and he turned upon Seumas and with one great stroke, holding his sword with both hands, daring the body sweep which Seumas aimed at him, and with a roar which rang in that place most strangely, he cleft the head of Seumas from its shoulders!

Rigid, her mouth open, her hands thrown out before her, her great eyes flaming, her red hair tossed across her shoulder and dropping to the floor before her, Fedalm looked upon her kinsman, and even the man who had struck him down and now

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drew his dripping sword upon his body, to cleanse it, even he was held in awe by the dreadful face of the woman who saw herself left to torture and death, and the brother of her lord dead at her feet.

And although the Sweynie had not known fear in all his life, nor ever shuddered at the dreadful faces of women, which his memory could bring to him, yet in that instant he knew fear, blind and unreasoning. And then he shook it off, for the lids drooped over the wild eyes, and Fedalm swayed upon her feet.

He sprang to clasp her. He held her, and he cast the thought of death from him. Perhaps it would be possible to find a way out, to lurk, to hide, to go through the country back of the three headlands, to find a galley—or, those which had lain in the cove. A dozen schemes beat through his shrewd head as he stood beside the dead man on the floor and held the swooning girl in his arms, and again, that tenderness which she, and she only, had ever drawn from him welled up in him.

With his hands clotted with the blood of her kinsmen, he bent his lips to hers, and his heart surged up in a wild burst of exultation as he felt that they did not close against him.

Fedalm's eyes were wide open and fixed, as if she knew nothing of what was passing about her, and her small hand, wandering and fluttering, crept up to his bosom.

The Viking pressed her passionately against him, feeling that first sign of her yielding to him, and Fedalm all but smiled into his eyes, and then her hand found that for which she sought and drew it forth, and with one convulsive movement of her whole body she thrust into his throat the long, sharp bodkin of the brooch of Tlaya.

THE Viking stared down into her face, and she saw that for a moment surprise filled his glance, and then —incredible as it was—immeasurable reproach, but still he held her, relaxing not the strangling pressure of his arms, although the blood sprang from the great vein into which Fedalm yet held the sharp point. And without warning he fell, so that he carried her with him, and he coughed, so that he spewed blood upon her bosom and lay still.

Fedalm got to her feet, clutching the brooch. The Sweynie was dead. She stepped over him and knelt beside Seumas and she laid her hand, most tenderly, on the glazed eyes which had looked upon her so truly, but she did not weep. The fountain of tears was dried within her.

And as she knelt, she heard the voice of Angus, and knew that it came from the chamber of the Mystic Shield. And as she listened, it grew louder, so that she knew her lord approached, that he was near the altar, and that he had seen the door back of it, which was open. Again she stood rigid, and now she knew such fear as had not been upon her before, though she had stood near to the utmost that can happen a maid, and had seen her brother in love fall before her eyes.

For behind the altar where none but Kapultep and Queen Tlaya dared to set foot, was that which no man spoke of, save with bated breath. Yet toward that—the dark god which Kapultep worshiped—the strange thing, alive and yet seemingly dead, which struck horror and sickening nausea to the hearts of even the stoutest, when the priest held it aloft in the ceremonies of the Crossing of the Sun—toward the enormous python Angus was surely making his way, led, probably, by some sound of the deeds done by the three who had but lately played so strange a part in the chamber behind it—toward that—toward an awful death, Angus was coming, drawing nearer with every anxious step!

Fedalm drew in such a breath as, it seemed, would burst her veins, and then she went toward the door, with the dripping brooch in her hand.

Angus had, indeed, heard an echo of the shouts and falls from the chamber back of the altar, and running ahead of his party, he had come into the place of the Mystic Shield, crying the name of his love. And he was sure that he heard a movement somewhere in the chamber, so that he walked forward cautiously, his sword in his hand. Then he saw the low little door behind the place where the shield hung, and he went toward it.

He made one step and was flung straightway across the room, lifted and tossed as if he had been no more than a pebble sent from a child's hand. His head struck against the stone wall, and he lay dazed, not knowing what had befallen him. Then, life returning to him, he got to his

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feet and ran forward, shouting, and then, again, was he thrown backward, as if a mountain drove against his breast, but that time he saw what it was which so handled him, and his very soul clamored and shrieked within his dried and shaking mouth.

For he saw a monster snake rearing itself upon its mighty coils, waving its long, evil head to and fro, and looking upon him with its inscrutable green eyes; old, somber, unwinking, wise eyes before which his own fell and his man's courage melted like snow in the sun.

Yet he drew his sword. His knees shook, but he drew his sword, and he advanced, but the blow of the great, three-cornered, vicious head might not be warded off by any skill. It caught him again, on the chest, and broke a rib, and knocked the sword from him and sent it flying into a far corner.

Now the warrior soul of Angus awoke in him, and he ran at the thing, seeking to crush its neck with his two hands, though to touch it seemed worse than death, but it played with him, sliding hideously upon the rock floor, its great length whipping into sinuous lines of sinister beauty, and it broke his hold as though his hands were those of a babe and then, while its head tapped him, here and there, lightly, surely, while he struggled, kicking and striking, he felt a touch upon his foot, and looking down, saw that the big coils were settling around him, hugging him, pressing him, as a lover, embracing him in the icy, slimy, merciless, strangling hold of incredible loathsomeness.

Angus uttered a cry, the like of which no one had ever heard from his lips before, but the great head was slipping around his arms—across his chest—and only one in all the world heard it.

She came, then. Fedalm came, then. She came straight across the chamber, stepping over the terrible mass of flesh which lay back of the altar, where the snake had cast it aside, when it arose from its bed to attack the newcomer. Kapultep, seeking refuge, had been careless, perhaps, or unheedful. Whatever it was, that unclean deity with whom he had frightened the people had turned upon him.

Fedalm did not even shudder as she walked over what had been the wily priest. She did not hurry as she walked to Angus, nor did she even look at him, although he sought by cries and prayers to keep her from him.

With the blazing brooch, tipped with crimson, in her hand, she stopped just without the circle of the slowly rising coils, and she struck one more blow. She drove the point of the great pin into the neck of the snake, at a point which she carefully searched for before her hand arose, and then she sprang as far as her lithe limbs would let her, for a convulsion ran all through the body, and it lashed about so that Angus, holding its throat with all his might as the coils loosened, could but hardly get clear of them.

He ran to Fedalm then. He cast his arms about her. Together, they fled from that accursed place where the snake lay dying, where what had been Kapultep lay, where the pile of skulls seemed fit symbol of all that had ever been, within the dark walls. And their last look, as they rolled the stone door upon its grooves, showed the evil brooch gleaming from the back of the snake like the demon of that dark kingdom.

When the stone was between them and all that lay within they stammered in each other's arms, and they told each other, speaking at the same time, like two children, all that had passed.

"How knew you where to strike the thing?" Angus demanded, when he could speak more clearly.

"You forget that I was the pupil of Kapultep, dearest one," Fedalm said. "He told me that sometimes an evil spirit entered into the god, and then the priest must find that one spot, which was all of mortality that the god possessed, and must strike there. So I knew I must do that."

Now from all parts of the island where they searched for Fedalm and the MacDubhas, men began to come, running and shouting, as they perceived the two who stood in each other's arms before the great rock. And Angus stepped forward and held up his hand, so that they were quiet.

"Be still, my brothers," he said, "as warriors should in the presence of the noble dead. Come you all, as your princess shall lead you to where lies the great heart of Seumas MacDubha."

THE END

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A REVIVING WIND

by Will Levington Comfort

FIRKS and two companions boarded the little coasting steamer at Mombasa for Mozambique. The three did not appear to belong to that class of men who take a year to round the world. Plainly they were not Middle-West farmers from North America. Firks was small and smooth, scant of hair and quick of limb, the last of the three you would get acquainted with, but the only one worth knowing. Ford and Park, his companions, are mere names and figures, as it happens. They come and go and prop.

Firks would not be picked for a scoundrel. He was more or less unmarked by his deviltries. He had a fine wit and a twinkling Irish eye. These were the sparklers that had lifted and redeemed him more than any rings which a man might pawn. He was forty years old, but looked indefinitely younger. He made friends but spent them. Ford and Park were not real friends of his; they sufficed for the present, a business relation.

The steamer's name was the *Zirippa*. She had a lame pump and a smoking-room. It was January and hot, blistering hot, down in the Portuguese waters. The three talked quietly together from time to time, apparently uninterested in any other passengers.

At Zanzibar, however, a young American boarded for the slow, five-day passage to Mozambique. He looked a bit ill and drawn from worry, but had a queer splendor about him—possibly a rich man's son under a cloud of some kind. His bags, changes of apparel, voice, habits and attitude to life, all indicated that he had been brought up like a young king, whether he felt that way about it or not.

The American's name was Ripley Dodd. He was permitted to "take on" at once with the detached three, and the quartet began to polish the mahogany of the smoking-room. Dodd played an execrable game of poker. Firks appeared to sympathize, though his luck was steadily off color and tone. Ford and Park did well. The young man not only lost steadily and in large sums, but he also lost with innate beauty and charm. Pure gameness in the lad and delicate humor, that caught on, even with the shark-faced Park.

On the fourth night of the passage, by common consent, the idea of seeking berths was given up. It was nearing midnight on the fifth and last night of the voyage that the session broke. The smoking-room was in great disorder—glasses, ice pitchers, sandwich rinds, cigar stubs and discarded decks were strewn about.

There was freshness neither in the faces nor the linen of the players, though an almost equal whiteness. The ship worked her way through the still and sultry tropic night. The electric fans plied steadily in the burning, smoky air where the four played. Ripley Dodd arose with a chuckle:

"I'm tired, fellows; but it has been a decent session all through. I'm going to get a bit of sleep before we make Mozambique in the morning. The fact is, a bath and a bunk is about all I've got left. If I played longer I couldn't buy that coffee-plantation over in Madagascar. Good night, men. Good night, kitty."

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"That's a handsome boy," Firks said thoughtfully, after a pause. "He's done something crooked for the first time. He wants to bury himself."

"*Yo tambien*," muttered Ford, to whom wine and bad Spanish were inseparable.

"We've done pretty well," said Park slowly. "But I believe we can get the coffee-farm money, too. We'll draw cards —low man follows the child. He's got a father and lot more behind him if I've a look at the breed. The other two can take care of the stray cash in Mozambique in the meanwhile. There used to be some down here."

The playing had ceased with the pulling out of the youngster. Firks drew the low card, and went to bed gloomily. The other two remained in the smoking-room an hour or more, drinking and planning.

THE next night on the water-front of Mozambique, Firks joined Ripley Dodd. They talkd for a time in the desultory fashion of drifters. Sooner or later, each intended to go across to Madagascar; Ford and Park were leaving at once, Firks said. The latter wasn't at his best. Firks liked the youngster and didn't appreciate the job that had fallen to him with the turn of a card. He inquired presently—

"Have you got any particular reason for broodin' over these unhealthy countries?"

"I did have," young Dodd answered, "but I regret to say, they have blown away."

Firks leaned forward, whispering:

"I told them last night and I'll tell you now, Dodd. I think you're a fine clean card, with a gold edge."

"Thanks, Mr. Firks, only the gold edge has been rubbed off. I need re-gilding. I never could play the fox and save sandwich money."

"Nor I," whispered Firks. "I haven't broken any record this time. But I understood you held out enough to buy a coffee plantation——"

"If coffee is cheap down here," the other said whimsically, taking a few coins and small bills from his pockets, "I may be able to buy a cup or two."

"Is that your whole pile?" Firks asked in astonishment.

"Just about. I might scrape up a dollar more."

Firks was relieved. The idea of taking more money away from this lad had irked him; still, in pursuing the conversation, he followed old grooves of mind:

"Guess we'd better hurry across and begin at once to comb the beaches of Madagascar, but we'll keep up a front here in Mozambique, leaving our baggage in the warehouse, and cut across the channel to think it out. Maybe I'm premature in that 'we' part, but I've got some ideas simmering—some startling ones. Shall we pull together for a while?"

"That would just suit me!" said Ripley Dodd, cordially.

"Gad, if we only had a few hundred dollars, we could——"

"I could get it by writing North—but I hate—just at present——"

"Oh, well, we'll get on top, some way," Firks said hastily.

They crossed the channel in style and stopped long enough at Tarafina for Ripley Dodd to get one long look at the strangest gathering of crooks anywhere. This was in the billiard and gambling-room of the Bombleu.

American, English, French and Spanish lounged upon verandas in fine linen, a godless gathering—spendthrifts of fortune, virtue and gold, a restless, reckless, trustless crowd, practically free from extradition, which was the first and last cause of the assembly in the last and loneliest port of the world.

From afar off, the two saw Ford and Park at a table with strangers. Firks and Ripley Dodd did not join the pair, instead they left the grounds, seeking the post-office where the American mailed a letter, addressed to a woman in the care of a famous caravansery on the far upper Nile. The woman's name was Marian Larned, Firks observed.

An answer would require at least three weeks. Firks decided to stick. The two now rambled through a sordid and squalid part of the town and stopped to consume bowls of *chili con carne* with coffee, in a dingy shop frequented by a dingier lot of natives. Then they tossed a coin to see which way they should journey farther.

Chance led them along the ancient Ocean Road. Night drew on—a night so gorgeous, so spicy with land-scents after the voyage, that they walked for hours without weariness. At last, Dodd sat down on the strand with the remark:

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"If we keep on going this way, we'll be back to Tarafina before long, which I understand isn't the plan. I'm camping here."

The two stretched out, listening to the monotone of the sea and the myriad of voices of the jungle.

"They played a good game of cards, eh?" Dodd muttered sleepily, after a time.

"Good of its kind—but rotten to the seeds."

"I thought you were a better loser, Firks—let's drop it," the big fellow said slowly.

"I guess you don't get me, Rip," Firks replied, with queer enticing quiet. "I lost a lot of change, too. It was only what I heard afterward—little steamer crossing the channel last night—Ford talking Spanish—a bit more maudlin than usual—said you were about as soft a piece of timber as he ever worked—thought he could drive his thumb-nail clear through you. Also he observed it was a shame to let you get away with that money for the coffee-farm."

"Forget what I said about you being a poor loser," Rip said contritely.

"That's all right. I suppose I ought to forget that pair, but it's hard," Firks added. "We ought to be able to get them. You play a corking good game of poker. I play a better game than you would think from what you've seen so far. We're bound to land something soon. It might be managed for us to meet up flush with Ford and Park."

Young Dodd was silent. The idea must have been welcome in a way, since he did not object at once.

"That was a lucky joke of yours about the coffee-farm money," Firks added.

There was no more talk after that, but Firks didn't sleep. He lay still breathing deep and steadily. It had been just like Park not to be satisfied with the first fleecing of the lad. It wasn't to Firks' liking to double-cross a white man, or to spend a month on a fifty-fifty chance for a mere thousand.

Still Ford and Park were safe hands and old hands. They played sure or short. Firks reflected that the triangle contract was binding and explicit. The card had turned fair enough. He went asleep restlessly at length in the wide night, wondering who Marian Larned was. If she were the mother, the name of Dodd was merely a convenience. Rip had spoken of his mother. . . Possibly, a sweetheart. . . .

A FORTNIGHT passed drearily for the two. Firks played as low in funds as the other and shared all the inequalities of life that result from this barren and dilapidated state. They were hung up in a little native town called Tombinato—Tombinato in the rains, a weedy broken thatch with a wide variety of dull but saturating odors.

Then Ripley Dodd fell ill with malaria and began to talk extensively. It was the third or fourth night of rambling voice that Firks' nerve broke a little. He observed to himself that he hadn't undertaken to be this man's orderly and intern.

"Why should I be hung up here—on a chance of a letter from a woman? Park wouldn't stick. Ford wouldn't stick. I guess they won't look for me to wear out my delicate health on a kid's sentiment like this."

Just then Ripley Dodd spoke the name of the woman he had written to. Firks paused at the door. The voice went on—sometimes intense, sometimes drawling, but always low:

"It's all true, Marian—I'm sorry. It's the worst that could possibly happen. I did it. It was I, all right—I'll pay the price. But when I think of my mother and you——"

Evidently, he was trying to make her believe the worst. Firks could understand that in young Dodd. Three days of delirium—tiresome but clean-cut in every habit of mind, Firks reflected. He had pieced out the story of the other's scandal and flight. He smiled at Rip's innocence—unless there was some dark and dreadful crime that escaped the fine combings of delirium.

First Rip had got himself into a lot of unwise gambling on a far bigger scale apparently than the game in the smoking-room of the *Zirippa;* a protracted period of wine had followed, after which an indulgent mother had been caught in the act of trying to pay off the son's debts, by an irate father who finished the payment, but canceled sonship.

So it appeared that Rip Dodd had gambled himself out of a great fortune before Firks touched the story. Utterly commonplace. But why a letter for money to one Marian Larned? That part was always cut short, even in delirium.

Tarafina was thirty miles away. Firks thought of some good cigarets, of a bottle of

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chilled amber wine; of Ford and Park, possibly more than ever opulent. They could only accept his failure gracefully. The triangle arrangement covered that.

He mused on the case of Rip Dodd again. Here was a young lad who thought his life was broken, his romance shattered, on account of a little peccadillo. Sure novelty, this. Dodd believed himself to be outlaw and remittance-man for life. Thirty miles to Tarafina. It was barely three weeks since the letter had gone to Marian Larned. . . .

Firks determined to gamble.

That night he arranged with a native boy to look in on Rip from time to time for a couple of days. He paid something down for the service, with money not supposed to be on his person.

Firks paled a little as he turned a last time to the flushed face on the cot. He was leaving it all on the knees of the gods, as he expressed it. If there were a letter for Dodd in Tarafina, he would bring it back. If not, he would rejoin Ford and Park, and forget the whole affair. After all, it was no concern of his if a half-baked young white man were traced to a fishing village of Madagascar and never heard of again.

There was no letter in Tarafina for Ripley Dodd, yet Firks turned around at once to Tombinato. He didn't call at the Bombleu for wine, and purchased a tray of inferior cigarets at one of the shops nearer the Ocean Road. He didn't even look up Ford and Park, but dropped a note to them, saying that he didn't have great expectations and would likely join them in a week or so, lowering the financial average of the outfit for the month. On the last part of his journey Firks found his feet hastening as one who expects to join a great comrade.

He was sullen at himself and strange all over—strange in the queer gladness of his heart to find that Rip had not been neglected and that he was nearer normal than he had been for ten days.

The month was rounded out. Firks gambled again. This time he didn't have a chance to fail. The looked-for letter wasn't in Tombinato, but a note requesting Mr. Ripley Dodd to call at the Bombleu. Firks went there and found the woman, Marian Larned.

"Where is he?" she asked quickly.

"Some distance. I might take you."

"Oh, yes, take me quickly—why did he not come himself? Is he ill?"

"He's better. He has been a kind of fever-sponge—waiting for his letter."

"I answered his letter in person," she said quickly. "How do you get to him?"

"The fact is I walked, miss. It's thirty miles——"

"I can walk thirty miles—but is it the quickest way?"

"We might hire ponies—only—the fact is——"

"Get ponies, if it is only a matter of money. It often happens that one is caught without money," she added to help him.

BEFORE starting for Tombinato Firks sent a message to Ford and Park at the Bombleu that the game was as ready as it ever would be, and suggesting that his two partners report in Tombinato unless affairs were extra pressing at Tarafina. Firks liked the woman. She made things easy. Also she was a sensation to be with—for a man who had lived in Tombinato in the rainy season, with only black faces to look at, and one white man whose look wasn't right.

She rode well and rapidly—urging forward toward her sick man in a way that made Firks strange and tired inside. He reflected that a man must be lucky in a different way, to cop a woman like this—to make a woman of this quality ride rapidly to him, to look so tense and splendid about it, as she hastened forward. She had eyes of frost and flame, but the calmness of a Celtic goddess was upon her mouth. That was what Rip Dodd needed, that calmness.

"He didn't ask you for money, did he?" Firks asked at last. The point had troubled him from the beginning.

"No, he wouldn't do that. In a letter to me was inclosed a letter to his mother. I was asked to deliver it so it could not possibly fall into the father's hands. His mother is royal-hearted. She knows our story. I asked her to tell me about the letter. We decided that I should bring the amount. Rip is wealthy on both sides of the house, you see. I had wanted so to know where he was. We were all together, in party, ascending the Nile, when Ripley left us."

RIP DODD, bare of foot, with a black cigar and a dynamic headache, came to the door of the shack as he heard the ponies. Firks saw that the woman's body turned rigid at the sight of

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his friend—her face upturned, eyelids closed. Her pony quickened to gallop.

Firks pulled up and watched the two come together. He could never remember afterward how the woman got off her pony. She did not fall. Young Dodd wasn't there to catch her in his arms. Indeed, Rip seemed nailed like a wooden upright to the entrance of the shack.

Firks kept going. He put his pony up in the town and walked along the shore for an hour. Night fell and darkened. He was very miserable—hungry, lonely, and disgusted with himself. There was a light in the shack and voices, as he returned. He was about to clear his throat, to make his coming known, when he heard:

"But there's more than that, Marian. I wasn't two weeks from home before I got caught again—lost all I had in the smoking-room of the *Zirippa* on the way down from Mombasa. No, I'm not to be trusted. At least, I needn't inflict a failure upon a—upon a wonderful girl like you."

"That's childish and absurd," she answered. "You talk as if you had some weakness of some kind. You don't need to be a gambler unless you want to. You wouldn't have started again this last time—if I had been along——"

Firks touched his tongue to his lips. They were dry. It suddenly came clear to him that the pair in the shack ahead had everything their own way, if they only knew it. Out of this came a vague idea, of vaster dimension, that the same thing was true with every living being, if he only knew it.

Rip was playing a fool. His was the voice of a man out of the range of hope, a man ready to shoot himself. He had left only that chivalry which would not bestow a half-gift. Marian Larned's sentence that Rip wouldn't have been caught in the *Zirippa* smoking-room if she had been along, repeated in Firks' mind. And he had opened the way for Ford and Park to come down.

"No, the old man is right," Rip broke out, after a moment's silence. "The stuff isn't in me, Mamie—all I've got is front. I don't know how to be a man. And I can't wish myself on you."

"But Rip—I want you. I'll do the gambling——"

Firks stepped forward. That last sentence of hers opened something in his heart—like a door banging open. Something new went through him, like a reviving wind. He was angry, impatient, but somehow expanded. He strode forward to the shack, entered, bowed quickly to the woman and confronted the man.

"Rip Dodd, hold up your head and listen to me—you big fellow! For once in my life I'm going to talk. You see me?"

Firks uncovered his head.

"Bald, man, eh? Forty years old. Look into my eyes—not so bad are they? Fooled you, all right—fooled this girl, who came down here for you. Would to God one had come for me! But that's all right. I got a dream just now of something like that ahead, for little old Firks at the very last.

"Oh, you kid, you awful kid. Nothin's spoiled. Why, look at me! I've done everything dirty—not even a clean crook—but nothin's spoiled. If a woman like that would say to me, 'I'll gamble on you, Firks!' I could turn reverse to every day of forty years—quick as the turn of a card. Me, I'm lit up with just the reflection of what she's giving you! And you—big, clean, young—all new—Rip Dodd, you're so sweet and clean inside I was ashamed to take your money. Days of delirium and not a sentence off color. You pulled me to you—cold little monster like me——"

He turned to the woman:

"I was going to leave him, but I couldn't. I was in Tarafina a week ago, but the clean straight stuff of him pulled me back. I was one of three who took his money on the *Zirippa*. I was one of three delegated to get the rest he had. I've waited here a month for the rest to come. Ford and Park will be here tomorrow, most likely, to help me take it away from him. That was the plan.

"I've taken money away from old men and children, from women—I haven't even gambled clean. I haven't even looked straight on the big game which a woman brings. Why, Rip, I wasn't sure it was in the world until your woman brought it to you before my eyes. That's all I want to know, though. I've got my picture to look at from now on."

He glanced from Rip to the woman. The shadow was deep in the little shack, but their eyes were used to it now. Firks looked cold and impenetrable, all except his eyes which shone queerly.

"I'm going to tidy up a little as I go on

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now—oh, not reform, nothing like that. Only I want something—want something hard—something like you've won here hands down—you awful kid! God, man, you've only got to stand up and be decent a while. I've got forty years to retrace—but I'm tellin' you it's worth it."

He laughed suddenly.

"So long. You've heard all I got to tell, you two—nobody else ever got that from me. I'm going on now. I was laughing to think of how Ford and Park would look—if they had heard what I've been sayin'! I'll get back to Tarafina late tonight and head 'em off and conclude my part of the contract."

Rip Dodd came close and took him by the shoulders, looking down.

"You say—the fever's out of me? All this isn't part of the fever?"

"I've got 'em, too, if it's phony."

"Do you need any money? There's some here now."

Firks laughed.

"——," he said, "I had money all the time. I played broke with you to get what you had comin'." He drew back. "That's only part of the ground I've got to retrace, Rip—but it's in the cards. It can be done. *Adios*—some time soon—you two——"

He bowed before the woman, a queer charm in his reverence, and burst out of the open door hastily. They watched for a moment or two. Firks didn't stop to arrange for a fresh pony, but took the Ocean Road straight back toward Tarafina.

Author of "The Rag and the Roaring Giant," "The Madness of Johnny Dyer," &c.

I WONDER if I ever relates to you about the little episode of child stealin' me an' Andy Mac engages in that time we're sojournin' with Colonel Henry Sears' outfit?" said the Old Trailer.

It was my custom when the old gentleman began that way to bring forth the box of pipes and tobacco from the bottom drawer of my desk. Selecting one of the pipes he filled and lit it with the air of one who fully appreciates the value of a pipe of tobacco.

"It was in the Summer of '81," he went on from the center of a cloud of smoke, "that me an' Andy was hangin' out at an Army post up in the Blackfoot country. There hadn't been no trouble with the reds up that way for so long we had just about forgot the last campaign, though the people down on the Rio Grande was havin' all the trouble you could shake a stick at. An' when there ain't nothin' goin' on that way life at an Army post ain't what you'd call excitin', an' a man kinda stagnates for want of somethin' to do.

"If it hadn't of been for a bunch of mongrel Mexican hoss traders that's camped down on Cutbank Crik I reckon me an' Andy would have cut loose from that Army outfit long before we did. But mighty near ever' afternoon we used to ride to that camp an' play monte with the greasers, which amusement was sufficient to keep the blood movin' in our veins. Still, Andy's mighty restless an' wants to move.

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" 'Sam,' he says to me one afternoon when we're on our way down to that camp of mongrels, 'contract or no contract, I'm figurin' on pullin' out of here. It's gettin' so ever' time I look around I figure I'm in a cemetary. I know a mighty likely place where a fellah might pick up a couple million dollars' worth of gold if he ain't afraid of work.'

" 'That's me too, Andy,' I says. 'But I reckon if we jump our contract we'll be bound to regret, so as we ain't got but another month let's stick it out.'

"However, Andy's hard to pacify an' wants to cut loose then an' there, but I finally get him talked out of the notion. It ain't a dozen days later when the Old Man gets a letter from the Great White Father at Washington informin' him to be on lookout for a party of land commissioners an' surveyors that's comin' out to look over that Blackfoot reservation with an eye to openin' her up to settlers.

"In due time this party arrives an' get to their labors, an' I notice they don't try to conceal them movements none. Me an' Andy figure that ain't a good play they're makin', because it's bound to cause hard feelin'. It sure does. One day here comes a young Blackfoot chief name of Runnin' Fox an' a few of his bucks lopin' into post demandin' a pow-wow with the Old Man. It happens me an' Andy knowed this Runnin' Fox pretty good an' maybe had a mite of influence with him, so the Old Man invites me an' Andy into that pow-wow to kinda back up his hand.

"When we're all congregated this Runnin' Fox don't keep us in suspense concernin' the purpose of that visit; he just blurts out before the whole meetin' that he's got his belly full of that land party chasin' around over his reservation cuttin' her up in town lots an' truck gardens. Of course me an' Andy an' the Old Man lights in an' tries to argue the Fox off them premises, informin' him it'll go down in history as a generous act an' a bit of philanthropy if he vacates.

"But the Fox figures he ain't goin' to be hornswoggled that way, you bet, an' coppers all them arguments we advances. He concludes by statin' if there's any movin' done it'll be done by this here land party. He tells the Old Man right to his face he'll make it mighty hot for certain folks if they don't vamoose an' leave that land be.

" 'You mean you'll fight, eh?' snaps the Old Man, bangin' his fist on the table. 'Very well, Runnin' Fox, fight she is. But as this country is run on the plan of the greatest good for the greatest number that land is goin' to be opened up to settlers if the job requires ever' soldier this side of hell to do it.'

"That painted savage looks at the Old Man like he's wonderin' if it's true what the Old Man says, then seein' he's heard the truth an' nothin' but the truth he gathers up his braves an' stalks out without say in' another word. The colonel's an old-timer in that neck of the woods an' knows the last word's been spoke between him an' the Fox; the next time they meet it's mighty likely the guns'll be goin'. He orders me an' Andy to saddle an' hike out to keep an eye on Runnin' Fox, while he puts ever'body else to work gettin' ready for a raid.

"Includin' three hundred soldiers an' their wives an' a couple of dozen Mexican women cooks an' nurses I reckon there's about three hundred an' fifty folks quartered at the post. That estimate includes little fourteen-months-old Anna Belle Sears, the Old Man's daughter. Ever'body at the post sets a heap of store by that infant, I tell you, specially her daddy. She's got a Mexican nurse, Anna Belle has, an' that party is informed she ain't to stray away from the post farther than a carbine'll carry.

"Well, me an' Andy keeps to the open accordin' to orders, but it's a couple of weeks before we see anything of the Fox's doin's. It's one afternoon we ride up to what had once been a mighty likely ranch belongin' to a couple of brothers, but this time we see it there ain't nothin' much left except smolderin' ruins. We look about for bodies, an' findin' none conclude the folks has got away safe. Also there ain't no stock visible, which we take it they've been stampeded by the reds, an' Runnin' Fox havin' the run of that country thereabouts we figure it's him that commits them depredations.

"The ranch bein' destructed that way makes it mighty plain that the Fox is keepin his word an' has took the long trail to pick up scalps an' loot. That's a bit of news the Old Man ought to know, of course, so we decides that Andy'll ride back to the post an' report them findin's while I ride on

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ahead an' keep tab on them redskins. He's to return to the ranch with the colonel an' his men an' pick up my trail from there.

"WHEN Andy rides away an' finally disappears down behind a swell I hike out. It ain't no hard matter to follah that trail in the soft loam, seein' it's made by about twenty ponies with unshod hoofs, so I travel along at a good clip till I come to the hills.

"Here the trail's a bit harder to follah owin' to the fact that unshod hoofs don't leave as plain a mark as iron shoes, so the work's slower. Even at that I reckon I know my business, me bein' a Government trailer that way, an' I finally come to a place called Finger Rock, where a lone shaft of stone stands pointin' to the sky.

"Here I finds the remains of a fire an' the ashes of that fire is still warm, so I know I'm comin close on to them redskins an figure I'd better ease up. It's mighty ticklish work ridin' that way when you're expectin' to ride into an ambush any minute, but I overcome all difficulties an' late that same afternoon ride out on top of a steep slope leadin' down into a little valley. An' right down at the foot of that slope there's a village containin' about a hundred teepees.

"If you know anything about reds you're aware they don't congregate in big villages that way 'less there's somethin' important goin' on, an' puttin' two an' two together I figure Runnin' Fox's foregatherin' his braves prior to a raid. An' there ain't no more likely place for a raid than the post where all them women an' children's located.

"Fortunately, I ain't seen when I rides out on top of the slope so promiscuous that way, thus I withdraw to a grove of trees about a quarter of a mile to the rear an' put the hoss away. Then I sneaks back to see what them folks is up to.

"There ain't nothin' doin' till it's almost too dark to see an' I'm on the verge of returnin' to the grove for sleep, when all of a sudden I hear the biggest kind of racket an' see 'em all runnin' towards one side of the village. Lookin' close I see where there's a buck just come in, an' he's carryin' a bundle of somethin' in his arms. It's the arrival of this fellah that's creatin' all that commotion, they're all crowdin' around him laughin' an' yellin' an' kickin' up their heels an' actin' the fool generally. It takes a mighty lot to get a red all stirred up that way, an' I reckon whatever it is that fellah's brought into camp is purty important.

"Well, I lay around there three nights an' two days, watchin' the village from the top of the slope durin' the day, an' bunkin' with the hoss in the grove at night, an' all the time wishin' Andy would show up. I figured he'd return with the soldiers an' we'd scoop down on both ends of the village an' make them redskins prisoners that easy.

"Sure enough, one mornin' about sunup here he comes, an' he ain't losin' no time either. But I see he's by hisself. He don't no more'n ride up to where I'm signalin' him than he piles out of the saddle like he's settin' on a hornet's nest an' I see he's got somethin' on his mind.

" 'Sam, what you reckon them miscreants has done?' he busts out with the little breath that's remainin' to him. 'Runnin' Fox has done gone an' stole little Anna Belle Sears right out of the post.'

"It takes a minute for that stupendous news to soak in, then I says:

" 'Andy, you're tellin' a huge lie. They ain't stole that child.'

" 'I'm tellin' you true,' says Andy. 'When I gets back to the post I finds the Old Man tearin' his hair an' ravin' about his poor stole Anna Belle, an' the Missus is about done up. Sam, I reckon me an' you's plum bound to relieve them sufferin's.'

"Then's when I recollected somethin' I'd seen previous.

" 'Andy, would you say I'm a liar if I tell you I seen that kidnapin' party?' I says.

" 'Aw, go on, Sam,' he says. 'You seen 'em?'

" 'Well, I reckon I did, pardner; you listen to me tell this tale an' see if I didn't,' I says.

"So I tell him about that fellah I seen come into the village with the bundle in his arms. It's the most evident thing I ever seen; that fellah's totin' little Anna Belle Sears sure as you're born.

" 'Don't that beat hell!' says Andy when I'm through relatin' that narrative. 'Sam, that savage is sure a wise man, ain't he? I'll bet he figures to hold little Anna Belle ransom till the Old Man calls in that land party an' sends 'em packin'. An' the Old Man's that set on that infant he'll do it too, you bet.'

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"I think around a bit in my mind, then I says—

" 'Say, Andy, is there anything against me an' you stealin' that child back an' thwartin' that dusky savage in his vile trick?'

" 'Now ain't that just what I'm thinkin' to myself,' observes Andy right back. 'Says I to myself, "Andy, if you an' Sam don't get that baby pronto an' put her in her mother's arms you'd better not stand responsible for that poor female's life. An' if anything happens to the colonel's Missus you wouldn't give a pint of liquor for the life of ever' red this side the Rockies. To avoid all them useless deaths you an' Sam's got to be good angels an' restore peace."

" 'Now you listen to me,' Andy goes on. 'When I informs the Old Man of me an' you findin' that ranch in ruins he's plum sore. He's all slicked up for warfare, the Old Man is, but the stealin' of little Anna Belle by these here reds coppers the bet an' he can't move none rash. Now the Old Man's figurin' on dickerin' with the Fox for the return of his infant, an' him an' forty soldiers comes along back with me as far as Finger Rock.

"In order not to rile that savage Runnin' Fox by that display of warfare, the Old Man halts at Finger Rock while I come on to get the lay of things. The colonel informs me to hoist the white flag for the Fox an' bring him along back to Finger Rock for a pow-wow, the Old Man havin' reconsidered them precious opinions concernin' that land.

" 'An' I reckon that's a good play, Sam,' Andy continues. 'You see, if all them soldiers comes chargin' up here there's goin' to be a heap of bloodshed an' little Anna Belle's goin' to be in the middle of it. The Old Man ain't takin' no chances like that, you bet. Now if the Old Man gives in to the Fox an' recalls that land party he's goin' to get a hot letter from the Great White Father, an' maybe he'll get his name scratched off the Government list in disgrace.

" 'Now if me an' you was to go against orders an' exercise our own judgment an' captures that child all them difficulties are averted, ain't they? Therefore I asks, do we steal that child, or do we not?'

" 'We sure do, Andy,' I said right off. 'I ain't ever engaged in no kidnapin' 'less I'm drunk, but I'm sure willin' to learn the art.'

"Andy chances to have a bottle of liquor in his bag, him afraid of snake bite that way, so he gets her out an' we have a drink on that scheme we're embarkin' on.

"It's sure monotonous waitin' ten or twelve hours for the sun to set, but that orb finally dips down behind the hills an' we prepare to maneuver. From the top of the slope where we repair at dusk it ain't no trouble locatin' the chief's teepee, owin' to the feather pole standin' just outside the door, an' there's where we figure little Anna Belle's most likely to be kept in bondage. It happens the chief's teepee is located at our end of the village an' that's a point in our favor.

"We figured if we had any trouble a-tall it'd be with the dogs, which there's always a few dozen hangin' around an Indian village that way an' they can smell a white man forty mile; but the Great Spirit was playin' our hand that night, because we was on the lee side of the village an' the dogs couldn't get a line on us.

"In the center of the village the squaws had built up a big fire, an' ever'body able to get there was stacked up around the fire listenin' to Runnin' Fox recite his troubles. I reckon he wasn't sayin' nice things about the whites, either, what with him lookin' to be dispossessed out of house an' home that way.

"Well, that gatherin' around the fire was our cue, so we slides down the slope through the high weeds an' finally arrives in the rear of the chief's teepee. It's all arranged previous, I'm to do the stealin', Andy remainin' outside to back the play as lookout. There bein' no door in the rear side of that domicile I make one by runnin' my knife from top to bottom an' crawl through.

"It's mighty dark inside that teepee, you bet, an' I've got to go mighty slow, but purty soon my hand falls on somethin' soft an' warm an' I reckon it's the kid I'm after. She's layin' on a blanket kickin' up her heels an whimperin' like a young puppy.

"Now I'm partial to kids, though I ain't never had none myself, an' I don't go out of bounds to abuse 'em; but I knowed right well if ever that infant let loose a yell it's goin' hard with me an' Andy. To prevent that calamity I slap my hand over the kid's muzzle. She don't like that none, sure, but it's a good play as I learn later when I take the muffler off again. Wrappin' the

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kid in the blanket she's layin' on I retreat out of that teepee, an' in due time we pass back up the slope an' arrive at our hosses.

" 'We're sure some accomplished kidnapers, Sam,' says Andy as we climb into our saddles.

" 'I'm tellin' you, Andy,' I says as we ride away, the infant on the saddle before me.

"IT'S some time before sunup when we locate a fire about where Finger Rock stands, an' by an' by we ride into camp. We don't have to chase around that camp seekin' the Old Man; he's right there waitin' for us. I've taken the muffler off an' that kid's yellin' to beat the band, which that's music to the Old Man's ears. He lopes up an' grabs that package an' goes tearin' away to the fire to see if that little Anna Belle's been damaged any.

"Me an' Andy feels kinda done up with all them adventures, so we slides out of our saddles an' seeks a place to rest our weary bones. Before we make a success of that job, however, here comes the Old Man lopin' back again, an' he's cussin' somethin' awful. The kid's hangin' over his arm screechin' for all she's worth.

" 'Hey, you derned jackasses!' the Old Man yells when he gets a sight at me an' Andy. 'What kinda game you puttin' up on your superior officer? Where'd you get this thing?'

"With that he shoves the kid at us an' we're astonished to see it ain't no white kid a-tall, it's a papoose. You bet we liked to dropped dead when we figured that quick we'd stole the wrong kid.

" 'That ain't no baby of mine, you lunatics! That must be Runnin' Fox's brat!' yelps the Old Man, an' goes off on another string of cussin'.

"I reckon he'd of stood there till daylight swearin' at me an' Andy for bein' such derned fools, an' I ain't sayin' he didn't have just cause, only just about the time he gets a good start on them profanities here comes a fellah tearin' along on a hoss that's covered with foam from head to tail. We see this fellah's a soldier when he rides up, an' he throws hisself off his hoss that hasty he almost knocks the Old Man over.

" 'Beg to report little Anna Belle's found, sir,' he busts out.

"We're all that took we just stare at him like simple-minded children, an' the Old Man drops that papoose he's got like she's a hot coal. When this here newcomer gets sufficient breath he informs us Anna Belle's been found in that mongrel hoss traders' camp I mentions previous. That Mexican nurse she's got done trades her in to them hoss thieves an' they're gettin' ready to move when they get catched with the infant.

"Well, sir, the Old Man laughs an' he cries, an' when he ain't doin' either of them things he's cussin an' generally scandalizin' hisself before his troop. Owin' to that mistake we make me an' Andy feels a bit foolish an' we're lookin' for a place to hide out.

" 'Where you fellahs goin'? You come back here!' yells the Old Man, detectin' that play we're makin'. 'You ain't done nothin' to be ashamed of, boys,' he says. 'It's just popped in my head that papoose you-all abducts is goin' to come in mighty handy when we get to pow-wowin' with Runnin' Fox some more.'

"An' you bet we didn't have to wait long for that savage to show hisself. It's when we're about ready to set down to chuck that mornin' him an' about a dozen of his bucks comes lopin' in, an' they sure was some impatient riders, you bet. Of course there ain't nothin' to do but halt chuck an' go in session right then an' there, the Fox is that insistent.

"He's so tickled to get that kid back again he agrees to ever'thing the Old Man proposes, an' the papers is drawed up wherein' Runnin' Fox agrees to vacate the land without bloodshed. Then we all set down to breakfast like brothers, the Old Man takin' personal charge of that papoose."

"But the bundle you saw that fellow carry into the village?" I said, curiosity getting the best of me. "What was it?"

"Oh, that?" The Old Trailer paused to chuckle. "In that pow-wow we're informed by Runnin' Fox it's a keg of liquor that's been run in past the marshals an' the agent."

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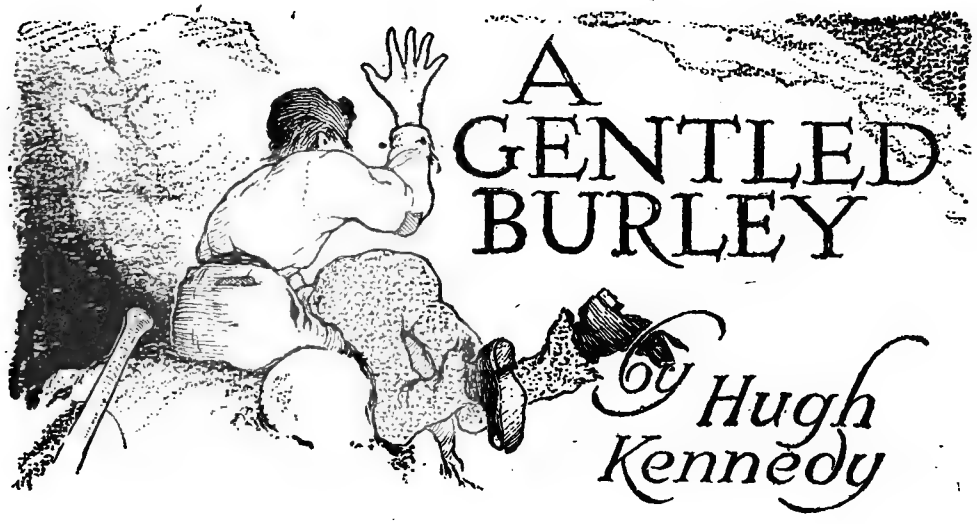

A GENTLED BURLEY

by Hugh Kennedy

THE real trouble with Burley was that he hadn't altogether left off being a boy and hadn't altogether come to be a man. He was healthier than was good for a boy and bigger than was reasonably necessary for a man; but neither man nor boy need have envied him his brains.

You would think that mucking ten hours a day in a rock-cut under a man-driver like Don Garstung would have used up all the spare energy in any man's body; but it didn't work out that way with "Big Burr," as the outfit called him. He did a horse's work, but had enough of the colt in him while doing it to set him looking for trouble—fun, he called it—any time he wasn't asleep.

Fun, to him, meant a slight advance on pulling one leg off a grasshopper to see it jump sideways, but a far remove from such brain-fagging pastimes as swapping opinions across the camp-stove, or arguing with the man in the next bunk, on subjects ranging in abstruseness from spirit messages, through single tax or perpetual motion, to Jess Willard.

That was how the fun started between him and Cripps. Fun was what Burley called it at first; the real name of it he learned later on. Don and his gang were driving a tunnel at the head of Number One rock-cut, and one morning Cripps came up from the forge with a bunch of sharpened steel just as the men had cleared out of the tunnel to wait for a couple of charges in the working face to go off. As the powder-monkey of the gang, that was his job—to pack drills between the hammer-men and the blacksmith, and to rustle powder from the magazine as Don called for it.

Cripps was a peakish little man whose clothes always seemed to be some sizes too large for him, so that the back view of him was like the garments of a real man hanging from a hook. He was always weary-looking, and had teary eyes and a bleached, chewed-up mustache. He never went partners with any one, like the rest of the men, but chummed up mostly with his own thoughts; and very bad company he kept.

He had a way of muttering to himself, screwing up his face and snapping his fingers as he walked; and sometimes, for no reason at all, he would break into a little run. His age couldn't have been much over thirty, but he looked well up in the fifties.

For a watch-charm Cripps carried a whimwham that was a match for himself in oddity. The watch itself was an ordinary, heavy, open-face affair, with a short, leather strap for a fob-chain; while the charm was nothing more precious than a nickel shoe-buckle, which he kept brightly burnished. Whether some sentimental memory attached to the thing no one knew, and Cripps was too close and surly to tell; but that he set great store by it was plain, for he would let no one touch it.

Always ready for a rest, Cripps set down

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his drills and began to wipe his watery eyes with a red bandanna handkerchief. It was a trick he had. Burley happened to be near him and he had been resting longer than was good for him—Don never would cut his fuses under thirty seconds. The glint of Cripps' watch-charm caught Burley's eye and he could no more resist the temptation it offered than a jackdaw could pass a glass button.

He slipped the watch from the little man's pocket and passed it to his nearest neighbor. At the same time, with the expression of a teacher's pet getting his good-conduct prize at the annual Sunday-school treat, he began to take a deep interest in the distant snowy peak of Mount Kimball.

For a moment Cripps stared, his face an utter blank. Then with a shrill squeak he darted after his property, which already had passed, of course, to a third man. So from hand to hand it went until it came back to Burley, Cripps just failing to retrieve it at each transfer. When Burley felt the watch again in his hand he came with a start out of his brown study and looked down in vast surprise.

"Now whadda you know about that!" he marveled. "If here ain't Crippsy's old ticker!" He pressed it on its owner with the air of doing him a large favor. "Is this what you was lookin' for, Crippsy?"

The answer Cripps made was lost in the muffled reports from the tunnel, but the thing he did will never be forgotten by the men who saw it. Taking a quick wind-up, like a pitcher when runners are on the bases, he let the whole works fly—watch, buckle, and all—at Burley's head. It just grazed Burley's ear and crashed against the jagged side of the cut. Glass and broken parts tinkled down the uneven rock. There was not enough of that watch left to interest a rag-and-bone picker.

The men went blind with laughter. Even the stern old Don couldn't keep back a guffaw. The sound made a crazy man of Cripps—or a demon; for his wild eyes and bared teeth might have belonged to either. He snatched up one of his drills and rushed at Burley to brain him with it. There still remained a few seconds of idleness to allow the fumes to work out of the tunnel, and Burley employed them in a way that he afterward learned to regret. Catching the steel bar in his big palm, he wrenched it away from Cripps as though it had been a pencil.

Then, with the ease of a schoolmaster dealing with a culprit in the first reader, he sprawled the little man over his knee. He may have hurt his victim, or not—opinions differ—but at any rate, he spanked him. Without a sign of temper he did it, and with a great show of being thorough and unhurried in his methods, while the men rocked in their tracks and their faces went purple with the heartiness of the fun.

Cripps, when he got to his feet, was panting, speechless. There is no rage like the rage of helplessness. "You—you—you——" He choked on it, the thing being beyond words. Tossing his hands about, he wheeled and went raging down the grade. At last he found voice and turned to shriek threats and blasphemy at Burley.

"You maul-headed, ham-handed, claw-footed bear's whelp!" he raved. "I'll get even for this, you double-dashed boob and bully," with more that was unprintably abusive and obscene.

But Burley, vastly refreshed, was already moving rock in the tunnel.

A WITLESS performance it had been at best, and nothing more should ever have come of it. It might have blown over in a day, had the camp afforded any diversion for the men beyond what they made for themselves. Sport? Certainly, there was sport for kings on every hand—sport such as rich men came from the ends of the world to enjoy—for the camp was set down in the heart of the Rockies. Mountains challenged the adventurous to climb them; bighorns made targets of themselves on wind-swept crags; grizzlies prowled beyond the timber-line. Nature's vastest playground surrounded them.

But the workers in the camps of the Tracy & O'Hearn outfit along the Beavertail cut-off had to content themselves with tamer pastimes. The eastbound Transcontinental slid down the grade and across the valley every morning at ten. That was the big event of the day. Freight-trains, especially if a man could evade the eye of his foreman long enough to count the cars, made other breaks in the tedium.

Not infrequently a train, although double-headed, would stall on the big grade.

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That helped. As for the Transcontinental westbound, she was rather an added trial, for she passed through at eleven at night and the heavy rumbling of her on the grade was enough to waken even the weariest sleeper.

But Burley, by evil fortune, had stumbled on perfect diversion, and life took on new zest for him. Flawless jokes were rare things in his young life and one of them had to last him a long time. He begged a strap and a harness-buckle from one of the teamsters and armed himself against melancholy by wearing the one as a fob-chain and the other as a charm. Often, when Cripps could not fail to see him, he would burnish the buckle earnestly, and seldom did he miss an opportunity to ask genially—

"How's the time, Crippsy, old man?"

Once, after a prolonged silence and much head-scratching, he even rose to heights of wit.

"That tin ticker of yours, Crippsy—I guess you thought it was faced with rock-crystal, eh?"

The clumsy pun kept him happy for days.

As for Cripps, except for the outbursts which such baiting drew from him, he shut himself up with his own thoughts more than ever. He couldn't take refuge in drink, for there was not a bar within twenty miles, and blind pigs were tabu near any outfit of Tracy's. He began to lie awake at night, and often neglected his food altogether, or gulped it so hurriedly that he might have been bolting his enemies, instead of his victuals.

For Burley was not the sole offender. The joke he had started ran the length of the camp, till Cripps could not hear a laugh along the right-of-way without thinking it was at his expense. The badgering of "white men"—the men of his own breed—he bore with the affability of a baited lynx; but to find himself the butt of Scandahoovians, Bohunks, Douks, Dagoes, Wops—such were the opprobrious names he gave to foreigners—was acid in his wounds.

But though he flew into transient rages with many, it was for Burley that he kept up an undying hate. That dense rantipole continued his teasing until old Don interfered. A weather-worn old master of men, as hard of feature as the rock he worked in so knowingly, Don saw much folly out of the corner of his eye and made no sign, so long as his work went on.

One day, while standing on the outer wall of the cut, he watched Cripps as he shambled along the path below with a shoulder-load of drills. He marked him snap his fingers, break into his little run, then stop as though to harangue some one beside his path. A log lay there—not a thing else—but it had a mossy clump on it, rounded out by snow to a shape somewhat resembling a man's head.

Cripps shook his fist at it, then suddenly threw down his drills and struck fiercely with one of them. Again and again he struck till the little knob was beaten into the trunk. Then he picked up his burden and went on; but he didn't run again, nor snap his fingers. He wept, with his red bandanna pressed to his eyes.

Don crooked a finger at Burley when next he passed with his barrow.

"That powder-monk has had about all the jollying that's good for him—or for you either," he said, evenly.

"Who? Cripps? I ain't done nothin' to hurt him. Been squealin', has he? The little runt!"

"He hasn't squealed. I'm squealing. Cut out the boob joshing. That goes."

Burley, even if he had not much sense, knew that tone of Don's. He climbed down:

"Sure, Don. The joke's gone stale, anyhow."

THE tunnel at Number One was a "coyote hole," as rockmen say. It undermined a great out-jutting crag which barred the line of the ten-mile cut-off the C. Q. N. was running around Beavertail Hill in order to get rid of the original four per cent. grade over the top. The hole ran about twenty feet in from the face of the cliff, turned nearly parallel to it for thirty more, then opened into a shorter chamber at right angles to it. Thus it was shaped like a T with a bent stem.

The cross-chamber was a mine, the tunnel a sap. When completed, the mine was to be charged with explosive and the tunnel solidly tamped with sand, timbers, and broken rock. A spark from a dry-cell battery would do the rest. Rock by thousands of tons would be dislodged into the bed of the stream, or be broken up enough for handling. At least, that was Don's idea, and Don knew rock.

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The tunnel had progressed nearly to completion without mishap of any kind. Working with dynamite, however, you never can tell. Don's gang, the muckers excepted, were picked rockmen—old-timers, mostly—that he could trust; and of them all he trusted Jalland most. Four holes were charged one morning, two in each working face of the cross-chamber, and the men cleared out of the tunnel. After the usual wait, came the first of the shots.

"One—two—three!" counted Don.

Annoyed, he looked at Jalland.

"How many did you count?"

"Three," said Jalland; "but two might have gone at once."

"No chance; not if that fuse is right. I cut them four seconds apart, same as usual."

They waited a while longer.

"I'll go in," announced Jalland.

"Take no chances," warned Don.

Jalland grinned the cocksure grin of the old-time rockman. They get that way, most of them, when they've worked long enough with powder—you can't teach them anything. He disappeared in the smoke and fumes that were still curling from the tunnel mouth. Others moved to follow him in.

"Wait," ordered Don.

Whether it was a case of a slow-burning fuse, or whether Jalland did some foolishness with a pick in rock that held a live percussion cap, no man will ever know. There came a shot, and the men waiting at the tunnel mouth staggered back, their faces blanched with horror. There was worse to come.

They brought him out, the bearers choking with the noxious fumes, and made a level bed for him with a couple of handbarrows. No man that looked at him once would look again. The mother who bore him wouldn't have known that still thing on the barrows for Tip Jalland. Don laid a mackinaw over him and silently motioned for four men to take up the barrows.

Cripps had seen; and so, too, had Burley. Overgrown kid that he was, the big fellow got a jolt that day that started him on the road to being an adult. For the first time in his heedless life he had looked on death. He laid a hand on Cripps' shoulder.

"Crippsy," he faltered, his eyes following the bearers picking their way down the cut, "that—that's—tough!" You could see how he felt, all the better, perhaps, that he couldn't get it out in words, blundering booby that he was. "You or me, Crippsy—it might just as well 've been you or me."

His big, clumsy hand slid down from Cripps' shoulder and stayed there, extended in front of the little man's body, while his eyes still followed the mackinaw and what it covered. He was too unhandy with language to say what he meant, but words could never have made it any plainer. He wanted Cripps to forget bygones, and make it up, and be friends.

Cripps had begun to wipe his teary eyes with his ever-ready bandanna—no, it was not pity; just that old trick of his. He saw Burley's hand and struck it from him in a gust of rage.

"Might 'a' been you?" he screamed. "Might 'a' been you? I only wish to God it had been you!"

Staggered by the blasphemy, Burley stepped back.

"Naw, Crippsy; naw, old man, you don't mean that."

But Crippsy did, as time was to prove.

NEVER again did the right-of-way hear in jest of Cripps and his watch. Jalland's death had put an end to all that foolishness. Knowing what was lying up there in the hospital hut, men went soberly about their work; but, soberly or not, the work had to go on. Especially in the case of the tunnel there came a sudden call for speeding up. Jalland had died on a Thursday. The following Saturday, the superintendent came out to Don at Number One. He had a telegram in his hand.

"More whirlwind stuff," he growled.

Don took the telegram and read:

Meet me westbound trans-con. Sunday night eleven. Stop over twenty-four hours only. Shoot tunnel at Number One Monday sure. L. T.

"L. T." was Lawrence Tracy himself.

"Can you do it?" asked the superintendent.

"Do it?" Don laughed shortly. "When L. T. says 'shoot', the easiest thing to do is to shoot, whether you can or not. Lemme see. By working overtime a few hours, we can finish the hole tonight. Tomorrow, a shift on the job all day can charge her. Then by putting on a fresh

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crew all Sunday night we can have her tamped and ready to shoot some time Monday. Sure, we'll shoot Monday."

As a matter of history, they didn't shoot on Monday, nor on any day thereafter; but that was not Don's fault. As far as man could go, he put through his program.

Burley worked overtime with the rest of the crew till the rock-work was done. Then again all day Sunday he labored. He had been very subdued since the accident, seldom speaking, but doing enough for two men.

By three in the afternoon of Sunday, the chamber was filled.

For hours men had stood in line—stooped rather—throughout the length of the tunnel, passing full canisters of black powder in and empty ones out, as men pass buckets at a fire. Then they had set dynamite in place—enough to detonate the whole; and finally, the single percussion cap, with the battery wires running from it along the bottom of the tunnel. With an eye that missed nothing Don had supervised every step of this process until the wires stretched back over the hill to the spot he had picked out for the battery-end of them, where a man might with safety pull the plunger when all was ready.

Because it was Sunday, and other gangs were idle, many on-lookers hung about as the work progressed. Among the curious was Cripps; but he kept to himself, never speaking except to mutter now and then to that evil company he kept inside him. No one teased him any more. All that had been buried with Jalland.

Before the work of tamping commenced, there came a lull while Don called for volunteers for the night shift. The first to offer was Burley. He simply didn't know what it meant to feel tired. Besides, there was plainly something on his mind, and hard work may have been an aid to forgetting it.

"Better get some sleep, boy," advised Don gruffly.

"Put me on," Burley stubbornly repeated.

"On you are," growled Don. "Well, Cripps, what is it? Are you wanting on, too?"

Cripps, slack-jawed, had been staring at them, listening. He made no answer, but stood like a man in a trance.

"I asked you if you wanted on," barked Don.

"Huh? Me? I didn't hear. Eh? Want on? No, no, no; not me. Not on your life!"

"Then getta —— outa here!" The tension had begun to tell on Don's nerves.

Cripps got. He seemed unaccountably excited, for a little thing like a cursing-out from Don. He went down the grade tossing his hands and muttering. The habit was growing on him.

During the change-over, idlers crowded the mouth of the tunnel, peering curiously into its depths. As they tramped over the broken rock a spark flashed from the hobnails of one of them.

"For the love of Mike, keep away from there!" yelled Don, irritably. "Here, clear out of this, all of you that ain't down for the night-shift. There's powder enough in there to blow the top off old Kimball. Clear out, the lot of you!"

Getting irritable—that was one of the signs with Don. Another was that he ate no supper that night. He was as healthy as an iron man, and when he couldn't eat, you might be sure he was drinking. He would stay off the stuff for months at a time. Then, near the end of a big job, the strain was pretty sure to get him, and he would begin nipping at a bottle he had had all the time laid by under lock and key. It made no difference in his work, except that he drove his men harder. The rush over, he would disappear altogether for a week. He was an old-timer, and privileged.

He put Jagers, who had succeeded Jalland as straw-boss, in charge of the night-shift. He himself strode restlessly about, keeping an eye on everything the men did, but seldom interfering. Once an hour he would go back to his shack to nip at the bottle he had opened there.

By eleven o'clock, Jagers and the score of men working under him had filled the upper-arm of the tunnel and had begun to brace up the crook of it with timbers, to get the greatest possible resistance to the shock of the explosion.

Don looked on, finally grunting his approval. He held his watch-dial up to the light of a lantern.

"She's late tonight," referring to the westbound.

"Uh-huh!" agreed Jagers, his mind on the timbering.

Don had been growing more restless as the night wore on.

"Not often she's late," he continued.

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"I'll take a hike down the grade toward the siding. The supe and young Larry are down there to meet L. T. I may meet them coming up—if she's not too late."

"You're not bringin' him—" meaning Tracy— "up here tonight?" asked Jagers, a little nervous at the prospect.

"Him? Not if I can steer him away till morning. He'll do what he wants to do, anyway." He strode a few steps down the cut. "Don't forget," he threw over his shoulder, "if I don't get back, that supper will be ready in the cook-house at a quarter past. There won't be any gong, on account of the men sleeping."

But midnight came without sound of the train, and Don grew tired of waiting in the chilly night air. His craving came over him again and he returned to his hut without again visiting the work. He turned up the wick of his bracket-lamp and got down on one knee to drag a heavy locker from beneath his bunk. In it he kept his bottle and other things precious enough for lock and key. He stiffened a moment, listening.

"There's the westbound at last, blowing for the siding," he muttered, and quickened his movements.

He dragged the locker out.

"What's this?" he growled. "Jimmied, by crickey!"

The top of the locker had been pried open. A short steel drill lay on the floor near by. He felt in a corner of the box.

"Swine!" he snarled. "They've swiped my liquor."

Hopefully he ran a hand around the rifled locker, but found no bottle. Of a sudden he sprang erect.

"My God!" he breathed. "My God! The battery! It—it's gone!"

He stood a moment, rigid, giving his mind to it. Among hundreds of rough men, many might be willing to steal whisky, if they knew where it could be had. But the battery, and the mine loaded! Then he ripped out an oath.

"Cripps!" he roared. "Gone amuck! That maniac loose with a bottle of hooch and a battery, and twenty men at his mercy on top of that truckload of powder!"

HE DASHED out of the hut. There remained but one thing to do. He dared not take time to warn the men at the tunnel. He must get to the wire-ends at the back of the hill. He must get there before Cripps had time to connect up the battery. Every second counted. He turned out of the well-worn path to the cut and struck into the less used trail leading behind the hill.

The westbound, double-headed, already roared at the bottom of the long grade. Sparks and flames were leaping from her two stacks, yet she merely crawled against the heavy ascent. Devil take the train. He had other things to think of. He scrambled on up the slope, panting, pulling himself up by saplings, leaping from boulder to boulder, sick with dread. A hundred yards to go!

He fell to earth, stunned. The ground had bounced away from him, then back, like a struck rubber-ball. Confusedly he heard a roar as of an avalanche, saw a great roll of inky smoke, shot through with darting flames, mushrooming against the starry sky. Inert, dazed, he lay where he had fallen, conscious of the roar that the mountains were hurling back and forth, rumbling angrily at one another across the valley.

Too late. Cripps had got even.

The finer débris of the explosion, flung high into the air, came pattering back to earth. The echoes rumbled farther and farther away to quiescence. The laboring of the heavy train, gradually conquering the hill, could again be heard.

So. The mischief was done. Twenty stout men done to death—ground into dust, blown to the winds of heaven—to glut a paltry grudge. Beyond help they were, but not beyond avenging. Their slayer—God requite him—had trapped himself. Not a chance for escape from the valley had he. Now to lay hands on him.

Don sprang to his feet. Not a quarter-mile away, the drive-wheels of the Transcontinental still tore at the rails, yet the train crawled. Understanding, disillusionment, flashed over Don. So far from being trapped, Cripps was already in flight. To his maniac deed he had brought a maniac cunning, for he had made the train at once his signal to fire the mine and his means of escape. At his own chosen moment he had pulled the fatal plunger, had raced to the train, was even now boarding the blind baggage. He might escape.

With the instinct of the hunter to follow the trail, Don bounded off toward the railway. One chance in a thousand

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remained that he might reach it in time to board the rear coach. Over the rough ground, breaking trail through the snow, he floundered. At the windows of the sleeping-huts lights flared up. A confusion of voices came to him. Shadowy figures of men moving excitedly appeared in the light from the windows of the cook-house. One of them held a lantern.

"Hey!" Don bellowed. "This way with that lantern. This way. Beat it, you!"

The lantern would be a second string to his bow. With it he might swing down the train before it rounded the curve. The trainmen, if they saw, would not disregard his signal. He glanced over his shoulder to make sure that the man with the light was following.

"Come on! You with the lantern, there, come on! Come on!"

But the lantern was never really required. There was no need to signal the train, for Cripps had not made the blind baggage. His shaken nerves may have accounted for his failure; or the whisky, perhaps, had thus finished its devil's work. At any rate, Don found him lying there on the icy track. All of him, that is, below the hips was lying there, between the rails. The rest of him, a rumpled heap, lay on the ice and snow where it had rolled down off the ballast of the roadbed.

Don lifted the legless trunk to his knee. No man-made vengeance loitered here. Punishment swift as condign, retribution sharp, one-stroked, ghastly, had overtaken Cripps. He was mortally hurt.

There was little to be done. Don laid him down, head low, on the sloping ground as the man with the lantern, distancing the others, came up.

It was Burley. Breathless from running, his eyes staring with his effort to bring his lagging wits abreast of events, he stared down the lantern-light at the grim tableau.

Don gaped at him. How had he come? Where were the others? Many questions were to ask, answers to give; but this was not the moment for them. A life was passing. Other things, become trivial, must wait in silence for that grim event.

Cripps opened his eyes, blinking them feebly in the light of the lantern.

"Burley!" he gasped, like one who has seen a ghost. Again, more faintly—"Burley!"

Then he swooned away.

In silence they bent over him, Don grim, controlled, Burley breathing hard, but not altogether from exertion. First Jalland, now this. He was near the breaking-point.

Presently Cripps muttered again, although his eyes did not open. They bent their heads close to his lips to hear him.

"You—you—got clear?"

His whisper sank, at the end, to silence, cutting short the last word, half-formed. An uncontrollable sob broke from Burley.

"Got clear?" he echoed. "Hear him! Good old Crippsy, thinkin' of me, and him—him all——" He broke down utterly. "Yes, Crippsy," he blubbered, "we got clear—all of us." His voice rose to a sobbing bellow, as the voice of a youngster in tears is apt to do. "We was out—on our—way to supper."

Let us hope Cripps heard, and was consoled; for never again would mortal voice gain his ear.

They buried him, in the end, beside Jalland, making a final score of two for the coyote hole. But Burley learned, and the lesson marked the end of his nonage, that had the westbound been on time, or had Cripps been able to tell the hour, the score might well have been twenty-two—Jalland by chance, himself by design, and the rest for good measure.

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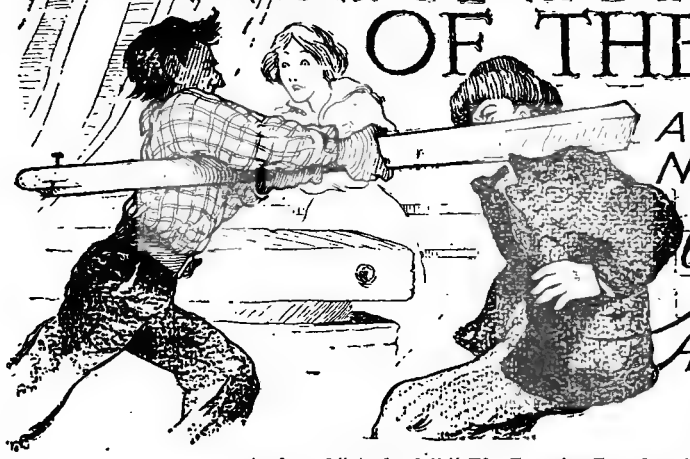

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Samuel Alexander White

Author of "Ambush," "The Foaming Foreshore," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE STRICKEN SLOOP

ALL night on the surge of the Spring floods the great birch-bark canoe fashioned by Montagnais Indian hands had glided down the fathomless fiord of the Saguenay past Trinity, past Eternity, past the mouths of rivers St. Jean, Little Saguenay and Marguerite, past Anse St. Etienne and a dozen smaller bays, and now off Tadousac, at the fiord's mouth, the gray St. Lawrence dawn flared wanly upon the occupants of the craft.

In bow and stern paddled two swarthy French-Canadian voyageurs, fit ferrymen through the grim roofless tunnel of that Northern glacier bed. Amidships lay the gear of a porpoise-fisher. While over it, hunched forward of the middle thwart and wielding a skilful third paddle, kneeled the owner of the gear whom the voyageurs knew to be Captain John Hilliard but newly appointed by the *Séminaire de Quebec* to the captaincy of one of the four fisheries of the Isle aux Coudres.

"Navigation's open, so keep a watch ahead and astern for steamers!" Hilliard warned the voyageurs as they swung into the vast channel of the St. Lawrence and headed up-stream. "We don't want to get run down by one, and the fog's getting pretty thick!"

Thick it was, indeed. Hilliard had a glimpse of the pier at Tadousac, from which a sloop containing a man and a woman was putting off into the fog ahead of them, of Point aux Vaches on the one hand and Point aux Bouleaux on the other, then he saw nothing but the snarl of white waves at the canoe-bow and the gray drift of the river mist before his eyes.

And hard on his spoken warning something bored out of the fog, out of the nothingness which his eyes could not pierce—the sheer steamer bow he feared.

Without sound of propeller or whistle it loomed over him all at once, like a cliff into which his own and his voyageurs' vigorous paddle strokes seemed about to drive the fragile craft. Simultaneously came a crash so close that he thought his own bow was stove, yet in another moment the birch-bark canoe floated whole, brushed like a cork along the rushing steamer-side that went by with the speed of a railway train.

The canoe spun 'round, almost capsized in the rolling swells of the steamer's wake, righted to the deft flirt of the voyageurs' blades and drifted down on the wrecked sailing craft the ocean-going vessel had crashed into and trampled under in her seaward passage.

"It's a sloop!" cried Hilliard to the voyageurs. "The sloop we saw leave Tadousac just ahead of us. Look! Yonder's the woman—and the man! Quick with your paddles, there!"

Swiftly they swerved alongside. The sloop, cut almost in two by the steamer's prow, lay like some vast broken-winged bird

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upon the river swells. The big sail held her, a sodden sea anchor dragging in the tide, while the two halves of the hull slowly began to careen.

Clinging to the careening halves lay the man and the woman, their backs to the canoe that had slipped phantom-like out of the fog. They saw neither the craft nor its occupants, and the sound of Hilliard's voice crying to them was their first intimation that any help was near.

"Hold tight, there!" he encouraged. "We'll have you off in a moment!"

CHAPTER II

THE MAID FROM THE RIVER

THE girl, her slim body almost prone upon the heeling after part of the sloop, turned her head at the words. Hilliard saw the heavenly flash of hope spring into her eyes, and, quite curiously, at the same time he noticed her apparel, a traveling suit of tan broadcloth that the water had scarcely splashed.

She wore no hat, but a fringed plaid steamer-rug was hooded over her head, draped across her shoulders and pinned at her throat with a great cameo pin. Also, he marked her hands, ringless girlish hands, clinging for sweet life to the splintered edge of the cockpit.

His craft was close upon her. He took a final paddle stroke and shipped his blade. While the voyageurs balanced the canoe perilously near the careening sloop he stood up and reached out sure hands to the slim white ones clenched on the broken timbers.

"Jump!" he urged tersely. "It'll go down in a second."

She launched out at his command, light of weight, lissome of body, swinging in air from the support of his hands to the close grip of his arms so that he lowered her safely between his knees as the voyageurs shot the canoe back from the sinking half of the sloop. It gurgled and was gone, and Hilliard felt the girl tremble as she stared at the swirl of the water.

"Heavens," she breathed, raising eyes brown as amber to his blue ones, "it takes one's breath away with its suddenness, and it makes one flame with anger to think that the steamer did not stop!"

"Indeed, yes!" agreed Hilliard emphatically. "The least she might have done was to slow down. You're sure you're none the worse of the shock?"

She shook her head.

"And you—I suppose I'm saying the obvious when I say I owe you my life!"

"Then the debt's already paid," returned Hilliard earnestly, "for I believe that if your sloop hadn't caused the steamer to swerve at the moment of collision she would have smashed our canoe like an egg. You saved us that misfortune, so the score's even. Still, I'm glad I was the one to be of service to you and to your companion. Yonder he is, taking the plunge!"

From the forward part of the sloop that was stopped short in its careening and unceremoniously dragged beneath the waves by the sinking of the after part dove the man who had sailed the craft. He had kicked off his shoes and, clad lightly in trousers of homespun and shirt of crimson flannel breasted the water easily as he swam toward the canoe.

"A good swimmer!" commented Hilliard, watching.

"Yes, and famed as a good sailor," supplemented the girl, "though he has had such ill luck as to lose the *Swallow*. Henri Sables is his name."

"Ah! Henri Sables, eh?"

"You happen to know him?" asked the girl in surprise.

"I never met him but I know of him—at least, something of him."

"How much do you know of him?" she demanded with a touch of curiosity.

"Well, for one thing that he comes from Isle aux Coudres and that, quite likely, you hail from the same place as he. You both were bound there, I take it, when the collision occurred!"

She nodded a head crowned with such hair as Hilliard had never seen, waving luxuriant hair darker than night, softer than the velvet cloud-gloom, richer-hued and more changeable than the gloss of purple grapes.

"Yes," she explained, "I have been visiting relatives down on Baie des Chaleurs and am now coming back home. No steamer calls at Isle aux Coudres, so it means disembarking at Tadousac and traveling the rest of the way by canoe or sailing craft. My uncle, Paul Mascarene, was to have met me at Tadousac, but he had to go over to the mainland on business of his schooners, over

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Baie St. Paul, and he could not come. He sent Henri Sables instead with his best sloop, the *Swallow*."

"So you are a niece of Paul Mascarene!" exclaimed Hilliard, ordering the voyageurs to swing the bow of the big canoe so that the swimming Sables might grip it.

"Yes, I am Helen Mascarene, and—" smiling whimsically—"a trouble to you, sir."

"No trouble, indeed, to land you at Isle aux Coudres," Hilliard hastened to assure her. "You see, I am bound there myself."

CHAPTER III

THE PORPOISE-HUNTER

HILLIARD pointed genially to the porpoise gear in the canoe bottom, and for the first time in the preoccupation of her rescue Helen Mascarene dropped her gaze to the lances and lines. Intuition came to her and swiftly the wonderful amber eyes appraised him, running over his six-foot seaman's frame that had all the strength with none of the roughness of the habitual handler of boats. She marked the fineness of his trousers of fawn corduroy, the softness in texture of his cream flannel shirt, the rich imported felt in the soft-brimmed hat he wore.

Moreover she saw that his mien matched his costume, free, easy, independent, yet out of the ordinary both as to expression and cut of features. His was a commanding face, handsome in its masculine ruggedness, bold chin, firm lips, nose well-chiseled, all lighted by the eyes of deep river-blue.

Helen Mascarene knew as she studied him that he ranked as a captain of sailing ships, and from this knowledge and the fact that he was bound to Isle aux Coudres for the porpoise-fishing she deduced his name.

"You are Captain Hilliard," she spoke with assurance, "Captain John Hilliard from Chicoutimi!"

"You guess well," he laughed, "and now you know what I know of Henri Sables. He was first lieutenant in the fisheries under Captain Paul Mascarene, I understand, and expected the captaincy that went to me. I heard even up the Saguenay that he took it very ill and had sworn vengeance on the man who was coming to the Isle. Isn't it true?"

"Yes, he did take it very ill," admitted Helen. "And I believe he did make some wild threats. He is not—well, he is somewhat irresponsible when his anger is stirred. But please don't let us have any unpleasantness about it if it can be helped. Promise me that, Captain Hilliard! Here is Henri about to climb aboard."

"How could a man refuse you anything, Miss Helen?" laughed Hilliard gallantly. "I promise lightly enough. It's in peaceful trade I am coming to your Isle and not on a hunt for feuds. And, to prove it, here's my hand to Henri to pull him aboard."

The Montagnais canoe curved high, with a sweeping bow, but it could be boarded with more safety there than over the unstable gunwale. The voyageurs had twisted the nose of the craft according to Hilliard's directions, and the swimming Sables eased up in his breasting of the river swells and warily grasped the scroll of the bark.

Treading water with a skill that brought him out of the water to the waist, he gradually depressed the bow, putting his weight upon it till with a grunt of satisfaction he worked his arms well across the edge.

"Steady with your blade, there!" Hilliard warned his steersman, as he stepped carefully forward to aid the bowsman in hauling Henri in.

The steersman kept the balance, while Hilliard and the bow voyageur slipped a hand under each of Sables' armpits and gently inched him up.

Little by little he came, gaining and holding with every rise and fall of the huge canoe upon the surge, so that at last he straddled the nose of the craft and swung his dripping legs inboard.

CHAPTER IV

FISHER RIVALS

SWART was Sables and sinewy, so dark of complexion that Hilliard was constrained to doubt his claim to the pure blood-strain that ran in the veins of Isle aux Coudres people. They, Hilliard knew, were the purest-bred French-Canadians in the New World, and Sables looked to him as if somewhere back in his adventurous ancestors there had been a dash of Montagnais Indian blood.

He had their squatness, the brawn of the fisher bulging in his limbs to which his wet clothing clung like a casing. Teeth foam-

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white glinted in his dark face, and above a fiercely-hooked nose his eyes shone with a somber flame like the blaze of black diamonds. He shook the water from his curly hair and slapped what he could from his limbs.

"A cool bath for the first," he observed nonchalantly to Hilliard, "and a lucky thing that you happened by in the canoe, else I think it would have been the river bottom for us both and that would have been a sad thing for one so young and beautiful as Helen here.

"Yes, a lucky thing, you and your canoe, though I thought at first sight it was the canoe of the legend paddling through the air and alighting with the fog. You have heard of it—the craft of sinful voyageurs? A demon crew with the devil himself for steersman! They say it comes for all reckless men at death."

"Yes, I've heard of it," grinned Hilliard, "though that's a poor compliment you pay me and my craft."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Sables. "Not so! I am glad of my mistake. It is not time for me to navigate the clouds as yet. But what a close call! Twenty-five knots that steamer was going and never a siren note! Yes, lucky, I say again, that we did not go with the *Swallow* on her last flight! Also it is good that Helen got off dry. Helen," addressing the girl, "have you found out to whom we owe this aid?"

"To Captain John Hilliard, Henri," informed Helen coolly but with a warning uplift of her eyebrows.

Sables started. Hilliard saw his swarthy face flush purple-red, saw the blaze of ferocity in the black-diamond eyes. Henri opened his lips with a savage jerk that heralded an attack on Hilliard, but the girl was speaking hurriedly.

"He is bound to Isle aux Coudres to take his place in the porpoise fishery," she elucidated. "So, fortunately, we don't interrupt his journey or change his course. And, Captain Hilliard—" turning her head to him with a whimsical light in her eyes and a pleading expression on her delicate, flower-like face—" could I be so bold as to ask you to hurry? The canoe will be slower than the sloop and I'm afraid my uncle will be getting anxious. I should have been at the Isle before he got back from Baie St. Paul, and now you see how it is."

"Don't worry, I'll make all the speed I can," declared Hilliard, answering her silent plea for cooperation. "Here's an extra paddle I carry in case of accidents. If Sables will use it, we can spin along all the faster."

"Yes, sit down, Henri," urged Helen, catching the paddle and thrusting it into his hands. "We'll make better time and the exertion will keep up the body-heat in you to dry those clothes of yours so that you may not look so like the scarecrows in my uncle's potato patch. Please sit down!"

Hilliard laughed silently in his deep chest. There was humor in the girl as well as native shrewdness. And Sables he could read at a glance. The great brute adored this adorable slip of a maid who could not be a day over twenty but who combined with the charm of her twenty years the cool wisdom of forty.

Sables, he saw, was putty in her hands. She worked and dented him where she willed. For there he was closing his grim mouth over his foam-white teeth, kneeling down and spending his fury in savage paddle strokes as they drove forward through the river fog.

CHAPTER V

ISLE AUX COUDRES

ALL morning and most of the afternoon they drove onward up the river, four paddles now instead of three flinging behind them the three-score and more miles of restless water that rolled between Tadousac and Isle aux Coudres. At erratic intervals the fog lifted, showing on the one hand the watery panorama of the St. Lawrence spreading majestically wide to the earth slopes of the South Shore, on the other hand the rocky frown of the precipitous North Shore studded with gigantic mountain capes that shouldered and jostled the surging waterway at every turn. Yonder, high over the grim shoreline, they caught the loom of the mighty Laurentides where the emerald splendor of Spring was greening over the last stubborn Winter snow that lay in the sunless chasms.

Nearer the wave-line gleamed the shining spires of village churches, wooden landing piers jutting out into the current, the white farmhouses climbing hillward in the sheltered coves. As through stained glass they saw them in the haze of the hovering

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mirage—St. Simeon, Cap à L'Aigle, Murray Bay, St. Irenee. Then Baie St. Paul opened up suddenly in the early evening, its portals Cape Labaie and Cape Corbeau bulking starkly as the mist cleared entirely away, first from the mainland and then from the hazel-clad island lying off the Baie.

"Isle aux Coudres—Hazel Isle!" exclaimed Helen raptly. "Home at last!"

"Hazel Isle, indeed!" nodded Hilliard. "It's well named, isn't it?"

"Perfectly named, and do you know who named it?"

"Jacques Cartier, if my memory serves me well! Am I right?"

"Yes," she told him, "and as Cartier saw it in the long, long ago, so we see it tonight. There is no change in the Isle itself. Only, there was nobody to welcome him. Look at the crowd upon the shore."

Hilliard stared over the girl's shoulder at a full thousand people, all the population of the island, so it seemed, gathered picturesquely on the beach at Le Mouillage, and at sight of that gathered throng he heard Henri Sables begin to curse softly to himself in the bow. Skilled seamen were these of Isle aux Coudres. How they would laugh and jocularly plague Henri when he confessed that he had lost Paul Mascarene's sloop!

"There's Father Raymond, the curé!" cried Helen. "And there's my uncle beside him at the front of the crowd. I told you he would be back from Baie St. Paul and that he would be getting anxious."

Beside the tall form of the priest Raymond, robed in the conventional garments of black, Hilliard caught sight of Paul Mascarene whom he had hitherto known only by fame. A great man he bulked in the mob, greater of girth than of height, with a skin of golden bronze and snow-white mustache and hair that contrasted strangely with the vigor of face and frame.

"Is he old—your uncle, I mean?" demanded Hilliard involuntarily.

"He is fifty," informed Helen laughingly, "but that is not old in this island. Wait and see some of the grandmothers and grandfathers! Uncle Paul is like a man of thirty and the best seaman on the St. Lawrence. What is he calling now?"

The big Montagnais canoe was nosing in to the beach, but, even before it touched, Mascarene's baritone voice clarioned across the water.

"How now, Henri?" he challenged. "What have you done with my *Swallow*, and why do you come like this with my niece in the canoe of a stranger?"

"The *Swallow?*" snarled Henri, leaping brusquely ashore before the others. "Ask the steamer captain who ran me down in the fog off Tadousac where the *Swallow* is. As for the rest, ask the stranger here."

Henri was gone in the crowd that rumbled with laughter and hailed him with sly jests, and Paul Mascarene's shrewd gray eyes twinkled as he stared after him. The *Swallow* was gone, that was plain, but it was better to smile in resignation over it than to curse in wrath. Henri was the wrathy one and burning with shame over what would pass for poor seamanship.

"Well, my Helen," Mascarene greeted his niece affectionately, taking her hand as she stepped from the craft and pulling her into an embrace of his great arms, "you are here at last! I thought you were never coming and that some accident must have happened. Was it a narrow escape?"

"Very narrow, Uncle Paul," declared the girl. "The steamer came on us without warning and sank the sloop like a basket."

"And it is to this stranger we are indebted for your glorious young self, eh? Your hand, comrade, and welcome to our Isle!"

CHAPTER VI

THE SHORES OF ROMANCE

HILLIARD stepped out and gripped Mascarene's hand heartily.

Behind him the swift voyageurs skilfully beached the canoe and carried it up the shore.

"You are from—" began the old seaman.

"From Chicoutimi, uncle!" put in Helen. "He is Captain Hilliard whom the *Séminaire* appointed. He was on his way here and luckily just behind us in the fog when the steamer ran down the *Swallow*."

"You say so!" exclaimed Mascarene joyously. "Then the hand of the good God must have been in this, Captain Hilliard."

"Yes, and fate or romance or destiny or whatever term best describes such happenings," laughed Hilliard, somewhat confused by the fervor of Paul Mascarene's gratitude.

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"Just so! Romance, beyond doubt!" chuckled Mascarene, his eyes twinkling brighter than ever. "Isle of romance this has been ever since the first, and maid of romance this same niece of mine that you bring safely to me. Ho! Ho! Yes, and you come in time."

"Have the porpoise been running in?" asked Hilliard eagerly.

"Not yet, but they may any moment. We've sighted them in different parts of the river, and the herring are in the vicinity. By the time we get our boats and gear in trim we shall surely have use for them. Meanwhile, Captain Hilliard, you lodge with me. Are your voyageurs staying?"

"Yes, they'll form part of my crew."

"Very well, there is plenty of room for them at my shipyard with my own crew. Let them go on with your craft and gear, and Henri Sables will give them quarters at the yard. Henri is first lieutenant under me, you see."

"So I had heard."

"Had you heard anything else?" Paul Mascarene's shrewd eyes gazed into Hilliard's with a whimsical expression. "Had you heard, by chance, the echo of Henri's loud voice?"

"Yes, it echoes even to Chicoutimi," informed Hilliard. "But what gain is there in repeating? He has done me no harm as yet. I hardly think it possible for him to do me any harm. And for my part I certainly wish him none. So there it ends."

"Yes, yes, it ends," put in Helen somewhat petulantly. "Uncle, let no suggestion of hate or rivalry spoil the coming of a guest. Here is Father Raymond, Captain Hilliard, the watcher over us all."

Raymond greeted them warmly, one palm pressed upon Helen's blue-black hair, the other extended to Hilliard.

"Let us thank God for your escape, little one!" he exclaimed. "It is good to have you here again. And you, Captain Hilliard, as father of the community I give you welcome to the island. You have rendered a service already that we can not repay, and it seems that you travel in an atmosphere of good fortune. It is given for some men to do that. I hope it continues. I hope you bring us luck. For luck of the seasons, of the weather, of the fisheries means much to my flock here."

"I hope so, too," smiled Hilliard genially. "Whatever voyageur's luck I have had I trust I may bring to the kill of the porpoise. Mascarene tells me it promises to be a good season."

"True, a good season," declared Mascarene, the soul of optimism. "Tomorrow we must be cruising the island shores, Captain Hilliard, and tonight I can chart the shallows and the tides for you so that you may know our ground. Let us get on to the house! But you, Father Raymond," inviting the curé, "can you not take supper with us to celebrate my niece's home-coming and afterward spend the evening over a pipe and a glass of good wine?"

"Indeed, I shall gladly celebrate that," accepted Raymond with alacrity, "and at the same time do honor to your guest."

He stepped ahead with Mascarene while Hilliard and Helen followed on their heels, making their way through the crowd that now gathered in little groups here and there, talking and laughing together, nodding in friendly fashion to the girl and whispering the name of her companion as he passed.

Among a romantic people he walked a romantic shore with the maid of romance he had plucked from the river by his side. In the calm of the evening they went, along the winding path that led through the hazel groves, all golden-dusted by the sunset, and while they walked, as if to seal the charm of the moment, the Isle and the girl upon his heart, from the twin steeples of the Church of St. Louis the clear-toned angelus began to ring.

And what an isle the sound embraced, isle of legend and romance, most storied isle in all Canadian history. Cartier had christened it. Champlain had often sojourned upon it. Great names of a later period were written 'round it in the indelible script of fame. The celebrated Captain Cook had sounded it. Carleton had garrisoned it. The immortal Wolfe had made it a rendezvous of fleets.

Afar, as they walked, they could glimpse the mighty street of the river, the thousand-mile ocean street flanked by its white habitant settlements and thronged with its traffic of ships. Ships there were from half the ports of the world, liners, freighters, schooners, all manner of ships of sail and steam and the gay tourist vessels native to the river bringing their hordes of sight-seers and cottagers to hive in Summer colonies along the cool shoreland steeps.

To Hilliard these seemed to come from

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another world, the atmosphere of that other world hanging about the ones they brought to dwell apart on the mainland and look across channel on unknown, forgotten Isle aux Coudres.

For no steamer ever docked against her fisher piers. No ferry-boat bridged the channel to the mainland. The only ferry was the swift, silent canoe to which the voyageurs were born. Untouched by the complexity of divers races who Summered at their very doors, their race was still the same as of old, full of folklore, legend, romance and deep-rooted religion enshrined about their beloved Church of St. Louis and Father Raymond its curé, the head of all the community.

CHAPTER VII

CENSITAIRES OF THE SEA

PAUL MASCARENE'S house was the house of cheer that night, a cheer graciously dispensed by his fair niece Helen, and so late ran the pipe and the tale over the mellow wine that next morning Hilliard did not wake according to his custom at the first streak of dawn. Instead, it was the brawny fist of Mascarene himself, pounding on the door, that wakened him.

"Hilliard—Hilliard!" yelled the hale old seaman. "The herring are in! Be quick! I am gone to the shipyard!"

Hilliard heard the patter of his feet, running like the feet of youth, and he could catch the trumpeting of his baritone voice as he shoved afloat with his crew.

He himself threw on his clothes and swiftly entered the dining-room where, Mascarene being a bachelor and Helen his only housekeeper, the breakfast was spread for three. Untouched it lay, and over the piping hot coffee waiting on the stove pouted the annoyed Helen.

"Look there," she greeted, a smile replacing her pout, "the breakfast was ready when the herring schooled, and my uncle is gone without it. You are to go, too, and you know how everything spoils."

"Never mind," cheered Hilliard playfully, "we can always dine in plenty but we can not always fish in plenty. Hunger can wait while we fill the nets. Come on and let's see how plentiful they are!"

In his buoyant mood he caught her hand and hurried her out of the house. The house stood on the south shore on a cleared knoll surrounded on three sides by wooded land whence Mascarene cut his timber and stacked it in the shipyard for the building of the schooners he launched upon the river.

Last exclusive home of the sailing ship in this age of steam, Isle aux Coudres grew, so to speak, the schooners that carried her trade to outside ports. The fourth side was open ground, sloping to the sea—for here the St. Lawrence was salt water, of immense width, a true inland sea—and together Hilliard and Helen ran down between the lumber piles and the working sheds toward the beach from which the boats were putting out.

Over a carpet of fresh, fragrant shavings they ran, past a sixty-ton schooner building on the stocks, to find Hilliard's crew, containing his two voyageurs, waiting for him at the water's edge. The other three crews of the four fisheries of the island were already afloat, each commanded by a captain and two lieutenants.

Paul Mascarene's was supposed to be the best crew. Joseph Bonnet's came next. Charles Fortune's ranked third. While Hilliard's, with a fresh commander and composed partly of new material, was an unknown quantity and as yet untried. Owning the seigniory of the island ever since 1687, an ecclesiastical rule of nearly two centuries, the *Séminaire de Quebec* enjoyed the prerogative of appointing the fishery captains but at the same time allowed its *censitaires* the right to elect their own lieutenants under these captains.

This arrangement worked to the common good, a good that Hilliard proposed to uphold as stoutly as the rest of the *censitaires*, even as stoutly as he proposed to maintain the reputation of a famed porpoise-hunter of the Saguenay that he brought with him to this principality of the maritime St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HERRING HAUL

STILL, it was not the porpoise this time. It was the schooling herring, and Hilliard could scarcely believe his eyes as he looked. In the light of dawn that sprayed all things with a faint rose glow he beheld such schools of herring as he had never seen in his life. Like beds of precious jewels

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scattered on a ground of dark-blue velvet they shoaled the St. Lawrence waters, swarming so close inshore that they silvered the island strands.

"Great heavens!" he ejaculated at the sight. "It's high time we were afloat. It would be a crime to miss these. Good-by for the present, Miss Helen. I guess your breakfast will have to wait."

He leaped into the nearest boat, seized its seine and stood ready to pay it out while his rowers shot him after the other crews to the outer rim of the many merged schools.

"Good luck, Captain Hilliard!" called Helen as he went. "And you'll see some shore fishing, too. Why, we can dip these out from here. I'm off to tell the people."

She waved her hand gaily and ran up the shore, spreading the news as she went. At her word the whole population of the island thronged down. Wood-cutters left their axes sticking in the tree trunks, potato planters dropped their hoes in the patch. Grandmothers and grandfathers, close on the century mark, hobbled on their canes. Came old Madame Diamond, the *femme sage*. Came older Bonesetter Hebert, the only island surgeon. Came even the curé, Father Raymond, running across his sixty-acre glebe with a bucket in his hand.

Such mad offshore and onshore fishing Isle aux Coudres had never seen. Nor was it likely to be seen again. It was a freak of the freakish herring, perhaps the most fickle fish that swims the sea.

Hilliard saw Helen's prediction come true. While his and the other crews seined on the outer edge of the incredible mass, the islanders dipped them up in the shallows in pots and pans and buckets. From dawn till dark the wild work went on, with only a pause to snatch a little food and drink, and then, true to their reputation for fickleness, the herring disappeared as unexpectedly as they had come.

Indeed, so unexpectedly they sounded that Hilliard, going out for a fresh haul just after landing a full seine found himself with an empty net and nothing to haul. Perforce he returned unladen to the beach at Mascarene's, his crew striking tune in the evening dusk to the lead of the two Chicoutimi voyageurs in a lively river chanson.

The beach was apparently deserted. Mascarene's, Bonnet's and Fortune's crews were in before him, and by the light of resinous torches he could see them tugging the barreled herring up the island slopes. He despatched his own crew to join in the toil and he himself stepped out on the shore, coiling some of the boat-gear in place before he followed them.

"Well, Captain Hilliard, I guess it's truly good fortune you bring us," a voice greeted him suddenly. "At any rate this has been a fortunate day for a start. What do you think?"

Hilliard looked up quickly. Leaning against the stacks of the sixty-ton schooner, shadowed among the timbers so that he had not noticed her, was Helen Mascarene.

"So it's you, Miss Helen!" he exclaimed, with a thrill of pleasure. "Like a ghost against the hull, too! Yes, I trust it is good fortune. Today's catch is a good omen, and it does seem as if the herring schooled on my heels."

"But they didn't school on your heels!" sneered another unexpected voice coming from the lumber piles of the shipyard.

Both Hilliard and Helen wheeled to see Henri Sables stalk from the gloom like a swarthy apparition. Hilliard had the sudden suspicion that Sables must have been lurking there behind the rest of Mascarene's crew, waiting till he himself should disembark.

There was not much of fact, to be sure, on which to base such a suspicion. It was more of a feeling, a presentiment, an unexplainable gift of the occult that seems ever present in those who live close to the sea. He regarded Henri sharply, but he could see nothing of any weapon about him.

"How do you know about the schooling?" he demanded of Sables. "Can you read the mind of the herring. If you can you're a better mind-reader than most of us and valuable as a prophet in the fishing."

"I am not a prophet," snapped Sables. "I am a fisherman. It was I who sighted the herring first this morning and brought the news to Mascarene. So, a dog of an outsider need not take the credit for them!"

"Outsider!" echoed Hilliard, his hands involuntarily clenching as he moved a step nearer to Sables. "Yes, I know that's what bites you. I heard that up at Chicoutimi, and men told me of threats you made."

"You would have done well to heed them!" declaimed Henri passionately. "You would have done well to stay where you were and not come intruding on Isle aux Coudres."

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"I'm no intruder," retorted Hilliard. "I'm here at the invitation of the *Séminaire de Quebec* and by due appointment."

"Your ground was the Saguenay. You had no business to come here when there were Isle aux Coudres men who would have made better captains."

Hilliard laughed shortly, although it was plain he had difficulty in controlling himself.

"Thanks for your praise, Henri!" he nodded. "I'm an outsider and a poor captain, eh? Well, we'll let it stand at that till the time comes for the proving. But if you trace back your ancestry far enough you will find you are more of an outsider in Isle aux Coudres than I am."

Sables' somber eyes blazed like coals in the dusk. His lips opened, his foam-white teeth flashing like the gleam of surf at night. He leaped closer to Hilliard till their chests, their very faces almost touched.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, trembling in his anger.

"Mean?" shrugged Hilliard. "Well, you clamor about outsiders, and I at least am pure bred!"

"And I?" choked Sables.

"You know the rumor that floats. Men of the river speak of your Montagnais blood."

Sables seemed about to strike, but his passion was too tremendous for the instant. It apparently paralyzed him, and only his tongue found movement.

"By the ——," he swore, his words coming in panting jerks, "for that—you will go back—where you came from! Tonight—you will go back, Hilliard—or I will kill you!"

CHAPTER IX

THE BLOW

"HENRI! Henri!" warned Helen, alarmed at his tone.

She took a step between the two men,but Hilliard put her gently back.

"Take care, Miss Helen," he cautioned. "He seems to be bent on making trouble, and I don't want you in its way."

He whirled on Sables and stared the fisheries' lieutenant squarely in his black diamond eyes.

"Watch your words, Sables!" he warned bluntly. "You've passed one threat, but because Helen Mascarene is here I choose not to notice it. Only, don't try to pass any more. And as for credit, I guess I'll take credit for what I've seined today and that is no small amount. It will measure up with the haul of any of the other crews."

"You lie!" blazed Sables. "We've beaten you by ——"

He failed to finish, for Hilliard's open palm swept across his mouth. Great as was Henri's weight, the open-handed blow lifted him cleanly from his feet and crashed him against the side of the building schooner. All in a second he crashed and recoiled, his hands instinctively grasping one of the vessel's shores, and before either Hilliard or Helen were aware that he had seized a weapon he brought the ponderous timber down on Hilliard's head.

The blow caught Hilliard on the side of the skull, sending him staggering back half-stunned, and as he staggered Sables, breathing hard in his throat like an angry beast, rained in more reckless blows.

"You fiend, Henri!" screamed Helen, clutching at his striking arms. "You devil!"

Sables laughed like a demon at the futility of her efforts, beating Hilliard back step by step to the water's edge till the latter's unsteady legs struck the gunwale of the boat from which he had just disembarked.

There Hilliard wavered a moment, swaying backward and forward, his fighting spirit still keeping him on his feet till with a last vicious blow Sables knocked him unconscious and tumbled him backward into the boat. Then Henri stooped quickly and with a shove of his bludgeon shot the craft adrift.

"There!" he growled. "May the St. Lawrence currents carry you back where you came from!"

"My heavens, Henri, what have you done?" gasped Helen. "Another boat, quick! Catch his before it gets into the grip of the current!"

Still laughing like a maniac, Henri stared at her without offering to move a limb.

"For me, Henri!" she appealed frantically. "Please do it for me!"

Yet she knew even as she appealed that her power over him was gone. The landing of Hilliard on Isle aux Coudres had worked the change. Never again would Sables be the same Sables, and he was not loath to make that clear to the girl he worshipped.

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"You wheedled me all along," he bellowed raucously. "You poked and played with me, but I am your dog no more. I am my own lion, and look out, my pretty Helen, that I don't turn and devour you unawares!"

He was off as he spoke, his squat back toward her, running up the slope with never so much as a look at the rowerless boat wallowing out to sea.

Helen ran to the water's edge and sprang into one of Mascarene's big boats. As she dropped an oar into the thole-pins she sent a hail up the hill at the top of her girlish lungs. She knew the men could not get down in time to catch the boat before it was lost in the darkness, but she hoped they might be in time to come to her aid if she succeeded in halting it.

"Uncle Paul!" she shrilled. "Here—on the river—help! Quick!"

Boldly she shoved off, but the craft had hardly cleared the shipyard cove when it grounded fast on a shoal. She was not able to see well in the dark, and she had eyes only for the drifting craft ahead. Half a dozen fathoms away from her grounded craft, it rocked sluggishly on the extreme edge of the swift current that careered 'round the island's point. Once in that current it was gone, and in the gloom of the night even a sailing vessel would have but slim hope of finding it without the guidance of a hail.

Try as she might, she could not shift her heavy grounded boat, so without hesitation she slipped off her shoes and poised herself on the bow. The fact that she could swim but little did not daunt her. Without thought of herself, thinking only of Hilliard, she launched out toward the craft that held him.

Her spring and plunge forward through the shallows on the edge of the shoal covered half the thirty-odd feet she had to cross. How she covered the other half she never knew. She knew only that at last she grasped the bow of the other boat, her light Summery dress that she had girded to her knees in her fishing soaked like a bathing-suit, the tang of salt water on her lips, in her nostrils, in her eyes, in her hair.

With the aid of the looped painter she clambered aboard and stooped over the quiet figure lying on the footboards.

"John!" she quavered, in a whisper. "John!"

He did not answer, and fearfully she ran her fingers under the loose collar of his shirt to feel his heart.

How she thrilled and warmed all through her wet being to the throbbing she felt. Hilliard was unconscious but alive.

With renewed strength she seized an oar, wrestling with the current that clutched for its prey, tugging the boat back till she could make it fast temporarily to the one she had left grounded on the shoal.

CHAPTER X

HELEN MASCARENE REPAYS

ASHORE Helen could see torches streaming down the slope and darting like giant fireflies about the pier that was used for the smaller boats. Also she could hear her uncle's baritone voice clamoring loudly in the night.

"Helen, where are you?" he demanded in alarm. "Are you on the river? And why is the other boat gone?"

"Here on the shoal, uncle!" she answered him. "John — Captain Hilliard — and Henri Sables quarreled at the landing. Henri struck him down with a timber and shoved him adrift in a boat. I had to row after him. I'm grounded here."

With an exclamation of amazement Mascarene piled half a dozen of his crew into another craft and hurried to tow in the two grounded boats.

"Run on ahead for the *femme sage* Madame Diamond and Bonesetter Hebert also," he directed Helen as he and his men carried Hilliard up to the house. "We don't know how much he is hurt and it is best to be on the safe side. Hurry and fetch them."

Helen sped on ahead and had the *femme sage* and bonesetter there before the men reached the house, bearded Hebert with his parchment skin and pale opal eyes, Madame Diamond in her crocheted jacket, her *Mother Hubbard* face peering from under a vivid canary sunbonnet.

"No broken bones!" pronounced Hebert while the two worked over Hilliard on a couch. "Nothing but a dislocated thumb that I shall snap in place before he opens his eyes."

"That is good," cackled the *femme sage*. "And I shall put a dressing on the scalp wound while you fix the thumb. These

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contusions must have massage tomorrow. My faith, what black-and-blue bruises! This man is a good dodger and he has shielded his head well with his arms, else I think his skull would have been broken in. There—" as the thumb was snapped in place and the bandages put on the head—"he is stirring already. Lend me your kitchen, my Helen, till I make him a brew!"

Madame Diamond and Bonesetter Hebert passed out into the kitchen where Paul Mascarene placed all things at their disposal. Helen remained standing by Hilliard's couch looking down at him, and as the others passed out of the room he slowly opened his eyes.

He saw her there in her water-soaked dress, the salt spray drying white on her dark hair, and suddenly it all came back to him. Not so deep in unconsciousness had Sables' bludgeon sent him that he could not remember drifting out helplessly in the boat, sensing the coming of another craft and hearing, dimly as in a dream, the voice of Helen whispering his Christian name.

"Helen, you risked your life," he began unevenly, the fulfilment of a wonderful vision in his eyes. "You came—out there—for me!"

"And why not," she stammered, flushing but attempting with a woman's naïveté to pass the thing off lightly. "You plucked me from the river down at Tadousac. Can one not repay a debt?"

"Yes, with interest," he murmured, touching her fingers significantly.

"May the Loupgarou run away with you for putting words in my mouth!" she exclaimed with burning cheeks. "What are you trying to have me do? Make love to you?"

"No," Hilliard smiled, putting up stiff hands with a painful effort and drawing her delicate, flower-like face down to his, "for I can do that myself!"

CHAPTER XI

THE OUTLAW CREW

IN THE morning Madame Diamond the *femme sage* came again to spend some time massaging Hilliard's muscles, anointing them with oils and salves to take the soreness out of the fibers, kneading them back to their proper resiliency. Bonesetter Hebert, too, hobbled over from his house-office to examine his patient, and both he and the *femme sage* pronounced him fit enough to go abroad, though he would have to be careful in the boat work for a day.

When Hilliard spoke of fees they laughed merrily. They could accept no fee but his friendship, and for good measure they regaled him before they departed with tales of how many a fisher's bones were knit and many a broken head healed in the clashes when an Isle aux Coudres vessel was caught smuggling in a cargo after night.

"Well, what shall we do today?" asked Helen, when the garrulous old pair were gone. "You do not think of going on the river?"

"Not so soon after Sables' gentle caresses," laughed Hilliard grimly. "First of all I'm going to square accounts with him. I met him in open-handed comradeship, thinking that he would get over his jealousy of me and that we could work along in the fisheries together without any unpleasantness. But last night showed me I was wrong. There isn't room for us both in the fisheries. One of us has to go, and if there's any law in Isle aux Coudres Henri Sables will be the one to go."

"There's the seignioral law," declared Helen. "The *Séminaire de Quebec* rules the island, and Father Raymond is their magistrate."

"Then Sables is going to get a dose of that law," vowed Hilliard. "Unless you prefer to have me let him alone!"

"Not I!" cried the girl quickly, her eyes flashing. "He was never more than a friend of mine, but he is a friend no longer. He made a criminal attack on you and must be dealt with as a criminal. You remember I told you he was irresponsible when he was angered. Well, he is more. He is a wild beast, and wild beasts should be placed where they will do no harm."

"That's my attitude exactly!" nodded Hilliard. "Let us go over and see Father Raymond at once."

They crossed from the house through the island by-paths, skirting the little fields where people labored, planting their potatoes and their vegetables or fishing from the strand for whatever the river might yield. This was their work of the land, but Hilliard saw that its trend was inevitably to the sea.

The fish they caught, the potatoes they grew, the schooners they built would eventually pass out across the waters in the

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mainland trade. Essentially a sea-bred people, for generations back the most famous sailors along the St. Lawrence proper or its broader gulf, smugglers yet even in this late day, they were bonded to the vast inland sea.

From it, almost exclusively, they drew their sustenance, and upon it the tenor of their lives was cast. In calm or wind, in fog or sunshine they voyaged it, a matchless expanse of surging blue fretted with the wakes of their own and far-hailing alien ships.

Even here where their way led them past Mascarene's shipyard where the fragrant timber was stacked and sun-burned workers toiled upon the clean-lined schooner, the trend of the toil was to the sea. The schooner was ready to be launched into the St. Lawrence waters, and over it hovered Paul Mascarene, directing his men as they put on the finishing touches.

He waved his hand at them as they passed and shouted through the pounding of the mallets.

"It is almost done for you, Helen—and for Hilliard, too," he called mischievously.

"I am longing to christen her," blushed Helen, shaking a hand of protest at her uncle. "And she will sail the porpoise-grounds like a witch. John, in a ship like that you will not miss any school that shows. Is she not a dream?"

"A beautiful ship!" appraised Hilliard, pausing to glimpse the end-on lines. "Such a schooner as one seldom sees!"

Indeed the schooner was the dream of Paul Mascarene's heart. For her he had cut the best timber of the island forests, chosen it with greatest care from the seasoning piles and worked it with the nicest cunning of his art. His own evolution in design, build and rig, she marked the climax of his efforts.

"What will you call her, Helen?" Hilliard asked.

"I'll christen her in your honor and call her the *Voyageur*," declared the girl.

On over the hills whence they glimpsed vast stretches of the sapphire-hued, mirage-haunted river they walked and into Raymond's *presbytère*. They found the curé poring over a volume of tales of his brethren, of those who had planted the faith along the St. Lawrence, of Father Garrault, Compain and the legend-famed Labrosse, but he put the tales aside swiftly at their coming.

"One of my flock—Henri Sables!" he exclaimed, amazed at the news of the assault on Hilliard. "I had not heard. I was over on the mainland at Baie St. Paul last night. But Henri must do penance for that."

"He must do more," asserted Hilliard determinedly. "Under the law of the *seigneur* of the island, the *Séminaire de Quebec*, you must remove him from his post in the fisheries, Father Raymond. If the law doesn't remove him, I shall have to take the law into my own hands and do it myself. And that, of course, I should not like to do in your parish."

"No, no, let us have no violence," pleaded Raymond. "It was a very brutal thing, and Henri will have to come under the law. Where is he now?"

"I saw him go down to the beach with the second lieutenant and some of my uncle's crew," informed Helen. "You had better go down quickly and do whatever is to be done before he has a chance to plot with them. He has a great hold over the men under him, and he may make trouble if he has any suspicion of what is coming."

"Yes, yes, let us go before the matter spreads," agreed Raymond, leading the way back across the glebe.

Down to the beach they hastened where they could see Sables and his men scanning the waters for any sign of the porpoise. He turned about to greet them with an evil smile, as if he had expected them to seek him out.

"What is this I hear about you, Henri?" demanded Father Raymond sternly. "Have you forgotten all my teaching that you set upon Captain Hilliard with malice and intent?"

"I forget nothing," returned Sables defiantly, "but that your *Séminaire* appointed him over my head to a position I should have had. One does not forget that so easily."

"You will have a good chance to forget it," flashed Hilliard. "I have laid a complaint to Raymond, and he is going to suspend you from the fisheries."

"He is?" blazed Sables.

"I am," declared Raymond. "By the power of the *Séminaire* I suspend you from the fisheries. You will not engage in the porpoise kill this season."

"But you haven't that power, Father Raymond," Henri snarled. "I am not

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appointed by the *Séminaire*. I am elected by the vote of the men. Only the vote of the men can depose me."

"And you have taken good care to conspire with them so that they won't vote against you, eh?" interposed Helen. "I see by their attitude and muttering that you have spread disaffection among them."

"Ha! My pretty Helen," laughed Sables harshly, making her an elaborate bow. "So you have turned against me with the rest?"

"I hate you!" breathed Helen. "Just wait till my uncle hears how you have worked like a worm among his crew."

"There is no use arguing," Father Raymond observed, with the philosophic calm of a judge. "It is true that Henri is elected, but it is only representation. The *Séminaire* has the supreme authority over captains, lieutenants and men. So, I say it once more, Henri, and I say it for the last time—you leave the fisheries!"

Over Sables' face passed a spasm of mighty rage. He crooked a finger to the men beside him and opened his tightly-drawn lips.

"Then these leave with me!" he countered.

"What's that?" demanded Hilliard, confronting the crew. "You are Mascarene's men. Are you going to desert him for this sneaking Sables?"

"We elected Henri," growled the second lieutenant as spokesman for the others. "We will not vote him out. Rather, we leave with him."

"Yes, and we take our boats and gear with us," cried Henri.

"No, you don't!" roared Hilliard. "They belong to the island fisheries. Here—give me a hand to stop them!"

He looked around for aid, but there were not many men about except those who had declared allegiance to Sables and were running the boats belonging to Mascarene's section of the fishery off from the beach. Mascarene himself was up at the shipyard and Fortune was off on patrol with all his crew. There was only Bonnet to come rushing at his shout with a handful of men.

Staving Bonnet's handful off in the shallows with their oars, Henri's men had five of the six boats afloat already. Into the sixth that was tied by a stout rope to the pier leaped Henri and the second lieutanant, and out on the pier to seize them before they could cast off the lashing ran Hilliard and Bonnet.

As they ran, Sables whirled the boat around the end of the pier with a pull on the oar, and in the twinkling of an eye the rope in its arc crossed the feet of the running men. Hilliard fell heavily on the very edge of the planks, but Bonnet was flicked cleanly off the pier down into the boiling tide.

In that moment Sables whirled his craft back and cast off the looped rope's-end from its pier-post. One could not say definitely in the excitement of the escape whether it was accident or design, but to Hilliard, straining his gaze over the current that had sucked Bonnet down, it seemed devilish design.

"Sables—stop and pick him up," he appealed. "He'll rise, and there's no other boat here!"

But Bonnet did not rise, and Sables' craft streaked on after the other five boats, all heading across to the mainland at Baie St. Paul.

"If I can not fish from Isle aux Coudres, I can fish from Baie St. Paul," he jeered from the distance before the point of the island blotted him out, "and tomorrow or the next day or the next, maybe, when the porpoise schools run in, I promise you I will be there with my crew!"

CHAPTER XII

THE COMING OF THE PORPOISE

THE disaffection of Sables left Paul Mascarene without a crew, and it was a wrathful Paul who launched the *Voyageur* off the stocks that afternoon for Hilliard to command and himself took over the drowned Bonnet's crew with all their boats. And none too soon the schooner cruised the fishing grounds, and none too soon Mascarene coached his strange crew, for two days afterward the porpoise ran in on Isle aux Coudres in great numbers.

Hilliard with the *Voyageur* and a patrol of lookouts keeping watch for their coming foamed the waters as he drove the schooner full-sailed into the shipyard cove, sprang out on the pier and brought the news to Fortune and Mascarene overhauling the gear of the crews.

"The porpoise, Mascarene!" he cried exultantly. "The little white whales are in at last!"

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A tremor of excitement rippled through the crews. They dropped their gear in place where they stood and with the swiftness of military precision lined up for their boat positions under their three captains Hilliard, Mascarene and Fortune.

"How now, Hilliard, what is to be done?" demanded Mascarene as the three stared out at the vanguard of the school that broke the blue river with flashes of silvery white. "You had fair sight of them and are able to judge. Shall we range 'round them and drive them in?"

"No—at least, not yet," counseled Hilliard. "Let them run in themselves. They are feeding on the small schools of herring and what do not run in we can drive in at the right moment."

"True," nodded Fortune, watching the rolling backs with a practised eye, "they are following their prey in. It will be a big kill. It will be such a kill as Isle aux Coudres men have never made before."

A deep murmur of anticipation stirred the men. Tensely they waited, all three crews with eyes fixed upon the oncoming school, and little by little behind them, in groups of a dozen, a score, and more the Isle aux Coudres people began to gather hurriedly. From the hilltops they had marked the speed with which Hilliard drove the *Voyageur* in with the news, marked the sporting school circling inshore and knew that the season's take was at hand.

Breathlessly, excitedly they gathered, coloring the green island slopes with their vivid habitant costumes, arguing with many gestures on the respective abilities of the crews. The hide and oil of a good porpoise was worth close to fifty dollars. The revenue from the industry was the mainstay of the island, and at the prospect of a heavy toll the islanders assembled in a body.

And yet not for this alone but in fearful eagerness to see if Henri Sables kept his promise to take a hand with his outlaw crew. For the kill of the porpoise marked the most festive occasion of the year when according to old custom the fairest maid of the Isle was carried off as a bride by the most successful hunter.

There she was—the fairest maid, the niece of Mascarene, coming down through the crowd to witness the struggle herself. Fair and sweet and fresh as a dew-laden flower she was coming to stand just behind her uncle and Hilliard where they waited with their anxious crews. How the Isle aux Coudres throng marveled at her beauty. What a prize of prizes was she for the best killer of the day. Their romantic hearts thrilled at the thought, and their eyes flashed in delightful anticipation of the battle they would witness.

Because Sables would surely come—over from Baie St. Paul. And as surely as he came it would be more than a battle between men and denizens of the deep. Henri had an ugly heart in the beginning, and now he was an outlaw with an outlaw crew and ready for desperate things. He was not in sight now, but he would be presently. He formed his own plans darkly. For was there not the accident to Joseph Bonnet to be remembered, poor Bonnet who somewhere out yonder slept under the porpoise-filled tide?

Helen, waiting expectantly for the boats to go out, heard the whispered foreboding behind her. She stepped forward a moment to Hilliard's side as if for a better view of the whales.

"You hear?" she murmured. "Be very careful out there. And if Sables comes, watch 'm well!"

Hilliard looked down into the amber eyes and smiled at the alarm he discovered there.

"Don't be afraid," he reassured her gaily. "If Henri comes, I'll watch him all right. I'm out to make the biggest kill, and I think I have it all in my own hands. Your uncle can't claim you, and Fortune is already married. The gods are kind, you see. I couldn't give you up to any other man of the island, and so they leave the matter of choice to me alone."

"But there's Sables to be remembered," Helen brooded. "I'm fearful of what may happen if you two clash out yonder. By his own act he has outlawed himself from the fisheries and now he is reckless enough to do anything."

"Still, you mustn't be afraid," he told her. "I can take care of myself. It's time to get afloat now. The porpoise are pretty well inshore. Pray for luck for us."

Surreptitiously he slipped a hand down and pressed her fingers. Then as she stepped back into the crowd he gave the order for his crew to shove off in the small boats. Sixty-ton schooners were all very well for cruising and sighting, but the craft

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that men could pull or paddle in emergency were the ones in which to fight the whales in inshore waters.

Hilliard had sighted the school in the beginning. Therefore, his was the privilege to time the attack, and that he was timing it well was evidenced by the attitude of his own and the other two crews. Mascarene, his golden-bronze face fairly glowing light in his expectancy, nodded knowingly to Fortune. Fortune nodded back, and upon the faces of the lieutenants and men of the crews rested a silent satisfaction. This Captain Hilliard was no tyro. King killer of the Saguenay, he carried his skill whereever he went, and beyond a doubt he would live up that day to the fame that had preceded him.

CHAPTER XIII

THE KILLERS

NOT only the crews were pleased. A murmur of approbation stirred Helen Mascarene and the other watchers on the shore. Too many kills had they witnessed not to be aware how one should be conducted. For it was high tide and just on the turn when the vast volume of water that covered to a considerable depth the shallows 'round Isle aux Coudres was beginning to ebb.

In these hidden shallows were driven the stakes of the fishery in the form of a sea corral, a concealed trap that lay set at high tide and stood sprung at low. The porpoise could enter without hindrance, but, once corraled by the ebbing of the tide, it was impossible for them to escape.

Now, following the small schools of darting herring, the main body of the porpoise was close inshore, well within the sunken edges of the corral. Stragglers still rolled about in the zone of safety, and it was to drive these in that Hilliard led the embarkation of the crews.

"All together, now!" he exhorted as they pulled. "Cut them off with a rush!"

Mascarene's and Fortune's boats were close upon his, a full score in all pulling to the stroke of the leading craft. In a semicircular movement they surrounded the straggling rearguard, keeping well between them and the open sea, and at the shadow of the strange hulls above them the frightened porpoise darted landward after their fellows.

"Good!" exclaimed Mascarene, pointing out the first ragged stake heads beginning to show in the swirls of the current. "You have your school well penned now, Hilliard. If we are all careful, I don't see the need of a single fish getting away."

The boats sculled in behind the porpoise, and up and down just inside the edge of the sea corral they patrolled in an unbroken line. It needed merely their presence there to keep the herded fish from attempting to break over the slowly appearing barrier. Timid as wild things of the land, they remained as far remote as possible from the riding craft, sinking themselves lower and lower in the ebbing waters, in an endeavor to escape notice.

Now the stake heads were half-way up the sides of the patrolling boats. Now they topped the gunwales, and Hilliard rose to his tall height in his own craft with his lance in hand.

"Everybody ready with their iron?" he demanded coolly. "All right—let them have it!"

As a single boat the whole fleet dashed impetuously upon the imprisoned school, and as they charged, another flotilla swept 'round the corner of the island and joined in the fray. A shout from the shore heralded its coming to Hilliard, and, staring through the flying spray, he identified Sables' outlawed crew captained by Henri himself.

Not for nothing had Henri kept watch from Baie St. Paul waters. He as well as Hilliard had sighted the school, and with his boats he had crossed over the channel and hung in the lee of the island till the fish were corraled.

"Well," he clarioned to Hilliard across the clamorous smother, "I am here as I promised for my share of the kill and the prize of Isle aux Coudres' fairest maid. Yes, and any man afloat or ashore who tries to stop me will feel my lance in his heart!"

"I'll soon stop you after I'm done with this school," bellowed Hilliard. "But the fish come first."

"Ha! Ha! Yes, the fish first!" echoed Sables.

He laughed in devilish glee, for he knew the other three crews dared not hesitate in the kill to try to turn his own crew out. That action would goad the porpoise to such frenzy of fear that they might well make a breach in the corral and escape to

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sea. So Hilliard, Mascarene and Fortune could do nothing but let him share the kill. He was vain enough to imagine he could outstrip Hilliard in the race of the lances, and afterward he wished for nothing more than to come to grips with Hilliard himself.

Driven frantic already by the darting charge of the four crews, the porpoise whirled around and around the corral, quivering the ponderous stakes like willow wands in their efforts to find an opening. But there was no opening. The barrier was shrewdly fashioned. The boats, too, herded them away from the river fence and they had to fight it out, giant fish against giant men in the watery amphitheatre under the gaze of nearly one thousand pairs of eyes.

Grimly, bitterly they fought it out, fear turning to anger as they were cornered by their foes. Cheering, splashing, the men were in upon them, harpooning right and left, lancing head-on so as to escape the lightning tail-smashes of their prey. Equestrians of the sea, they rode the ebbing wave, each boatfast to a flying twenty-foot whale.

Shuttling back and forth, here and there under the golden blaze of the sun they careered, the corral a lagoon of white spray rimmed 'round by the sleek blue expanse of surge without and shot through and through with the glint of steel lances, leaping, glistening porpoise bodies, and the flame of red fisher shirts flecked with snowy foam.

Amid the flame of red shirts streaked Hilliard's shirt of cream, his bronzed arms bare and his head uncovered as he and his crew hove short on the first lanced porpoise and landed it on the beach to the cheers of the enthusiastic multitude.

"First lance—a good omen!" cried Helen Mascarene.

She waved her hand encouragingly, and Hilliard shook his lance on high.

"Pray for more luck!" he shouted.

He laughed in sheer joy and exultation as he drove once more into the maze. It was ecstatic to fight this way for the bread of many mouths, his every nerve and muscle keyed to tightest pitch, and it was likewise ecstatic to battle for such as she. Sables would never have her. He swore that in the heat of the struggle, swore to win over Henri or go down himself in the wild welter.

Still, Sables was no sluggard and a hard man to vanquish. Small margin had Hilliard upon him when Henri landed the second lanced fish and plunged without pause back into the fray. Fast and furious the carcasses came out, Mascarene and Fortune fishing like madmen to save their reputations and keep from being too far distanced by the doughty younger captains.

As the whales were landed, the breathless Helen and half the whole crowd of excited islanders kept tally. Hilliard had the lead of the first fish for a while. That was known, but so well picked were the men of the crews, so evenly matched in skill that they captured fish for fish almost without variation.

Sometimes Hilliard had the lead of two or three. Sometimes Sables had the same advantage. Once Mascarene himself crept to the fore with a single whale, but the feverish minutes changed the tally with magic celerity. The take of each separate crew of the four went to the tally of the captain who spurred them on. A score stood to the credit of each captain, half a hundred, seventy-four apiece to Fortune and Mascarene and seventy-six apiece to Hilliard and Sables when the tide went out, baring the Isle aux Coudres shell-strewn shallows and blackening the clouds with mainland crows that feasted on the uncovered clams.

It was the full ebb and an even three hundred porpoise lay upon the beach with the corral itself almost clear of water save for a single pool in a sea cave near the stakes where sulked a single whale, the last survivor of the school.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TOLL OF THE TIDE

FORTUNE was about to make a dash for it in his boat, but Hilliard stopped him.

"Wait, Fortune," he requested. "Sables and I count seventy-six apiece. He is an outlaw here with an outlaw crew, but, outlaw or not, I am not going to let his score equal mine. This whale will decide. So leave it for us. Come, Henri, a lone lance and an even start!"

Hilliard waved the other men out of his boat to the beach, and Sables, even if he had so desired, could not but accept the challenge under the gaze of Helen Mascarene and the rest of the Isle aux Coudres people.

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He, too, waved his men away and cleared his craft for the contest.

"Who gets there first has the right to make the first cast," proposed Hilliard. "Is that agreed?"

Sables nodded blackly.

"And Mascarene starts us out?"

Again Henri nodded, leaning forward to stare into Hilliard's face with his malignant eyes.

"You may start, my famed Hilliard," he growled in a low voice, "but I promise you, if you happen to take that fish, you will never come back!"

Hilliard laughed scornfully in his face at the threat while the two poised themselves ready in their boats.

"All ready?" yelled Paul Mascarene. "Start!"

Pulling, paddling in very shallow places, poling where the boats threatened to ground, they went through the corral in a cloud of slime and spray. For a few fathoms the bows were even, then Hilliard's greater strength and limb-length told. He inched ahead of Henri as they neared the pool till he pulled a full boat's length clear and reached the sea cave with a fathom or two to spare.

"My cast, Henri!" he shouted, leaping up from his seat.

"The devil it is!" snarled Sables.

Beaten in the race, denied the first cast that might mean victory, shaken with rage, he threw the terms of his compact to the winds and drove the nose of his boat into Hilliard's fairly amidships. Oar in hand, he leaped as the boats crashed together, landing like a cat upon his feet in Hilliard's craft.

"There is only one porpoise," he gritted. "I will have it, and by the shades of the drowned I will have her with it."

He struck as he spoke, a whizzing horizontal swing of the oar aimed to sweep Hilliard overboard, but the latter ducked low in time. The shaft brushed his hair in passing, and as it passed he pounced with iron fingers on one of Henri's swinging arms.

The next second Sables was overbalanced, swung off his feet into air, the oar wrenched from his hands and himself crashed down on the boat bottom. His hand lighted upon Hilliard's lance as he fell. Like a flash he was upon his feet, the steel gleaming as he cast full at Hilliard's body as he would at a porpoise.

Hilliard caught the gleam barely in time to swerve his body. His instinctive half turn saved him. The lance grazed the skin of his bare arm and shot onward and downward, thudding squarely into the porpoise behind him in the pool.

For a dazed second Sables stood looking from the man he had missed to the whale he had caught, but the sudden tightening of the line reminded him he was fast to the fish he had coveted. Line in hand, he leaped back into his own boat before Hilliard had time to seize him.

"Ha! Ha!" he laughed sardonically at the quick turn of fortune in his favor.

He waved his hand in bravado to the crowd upon the beach.

"Count it in my tally!" he shouted triumphantly. "It is mine. Henri Sables wins!"

That gesture of careless bravado was Henri's undoing. Hilliard, lanceless and fifty feet away, saw his unwatched line snarl and loop his arm. Heaving short on the porpoise in the pool and fighting him in his cramped position by main strength, Sables' craft was whirled broadside on for a moment. Henri with his arm in the rope snarl had no chance to sheer clear, and in that swift moment the tail of the fish fluked out.

It was a terriffic twenty-foot lash of lightning muscle. It caught Henri across the body and smashed him, a broken-boned lifeless thing, sheer over the stakes of the sea corral and down into the ebbing tide.

Hilliard stared a second where Sables disappeared. The ebb went on out, the blue curl of waters edged with a thin line of snowy foam and backed by the shining windrows of sand and shells. Nothing reappeared, so he paddled his craft over to Henri's within the corral, took the latter's lance and buried it in the madly rushing fish.

There was a leap, a spurt of blood, a threshing paroxysm that made of the water-filled sea cave nothing but a geyser of spume. His boat splashed half full, himself wet with the flying spray, Hilliard hove short with the stout line, the scrape of his keel on the sands braking the porpoise to a halt till the last fluke of its tail subsided.

A cheer went up on shore and Hilliard looked around with leaping heart at the green-clad, blue-framed hazel isle, at the blaze of red shirts and bright costumes and bonnets and at the vision of the girl in the

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foreground of the steaming sands. It was a sight to thrill his being as, leaving the porpoise to be landed high by the strength of a crew, he poled slowly back to the island margin.

Upon that margin lay three hundred of three hundred and one odd porpoise taken in a single tide, and of the three hundred and one he had to his tally seventy-seven.

"Well," he smiled, catching Helen's hands as he jumped out on the beach, "I win after all, you see!"

"Yes, yes," she whispered thankfully, her amber eyes aglow, "I never doubted even on the edge of danger that you would! But about Henri—" the shadow of solemnity coming into her face—"was it not awful to see?"

"A swift death," admitted Hilliard with a grave shake of his head, "and much like a judgment to me!"

"True, a judgment," agreed Paul Mascarene, laying a fatherly hand on the arm of each to walk with them up to his house, "the judgment of the good God of fishers! Sables has gone to find Bonnet, and his going has chastened my rebellious crew. Look at their downcast eyes. They will come back to their former places without a whisper!"

A PAL LIKE YOU

by **PERCY W. REYNOLDS**

WHEN the troubles and cares of a world at war
Infested the passing days,
I dreamed of the years we lived before
In a sort of a mental haze.
I thought of the time we'd spent as chums,
When life's gray clouds were few,
And felt I heard the distant drums
That called a pal like you.

I sit at the table we used to share
At the little, old café,
And make believe you're sitting there
As you used to yesterday.
But a turned-down glass and an empty seat
Only make me sad and blue,
And I can not even drink or eat,
When I miss a pal like you.

I miss you, pal, and the nights are long,
Long and dark and still,
I miss the smile and I miss the song
That brought the old-time thrill,
And out of the night I hear you cry,
And the cry rings loud and true,
For you seem to say the same as I,
"I miss a pal like you."

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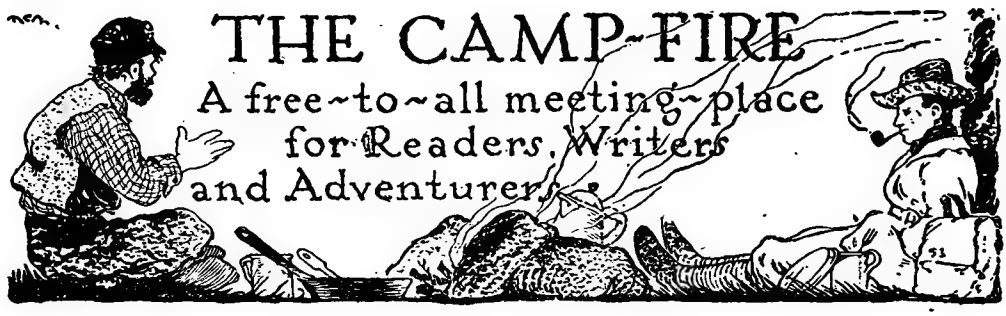

ONE of the remarkable things about our Camp-Fire is the diversity of those who gather about it. And the good-fellowship and comradeship despite the diversity. We come from everywhere—from the rods and the pulpit, from desert and stifling office, from the beach and the university, forecastle and physician's office. All kinds and conditions are we of the Camp-Fire. Yet because in each and all of us is a love for the big, strong, clean things of life, for the out of doors, for the power of muscle and brain and nerve, we gather together on an equal footing here, companions and comrades. Incidentally, it is democracy, world democracy.

Some of you are so lacking in the technicalities of education that I prime your letters here and there to make them easier reading. Some of you speak familiarly of such learned things that my poor brain can't follow you. What matter? Each one of us knows there is some one wiser than he and some one less wise. Each of us is wise in some things; ignorant in others. The man who can conjugate a Greek verb can not swing a lariat. The man who can go alone through the wildest parts of the earth is helpless in a laboratory. Who shall say which is the better man?

NOW here is a letter from a comrade who probably knows more out of books in a minute than I and many of you know in a week. It happens, also, that he has seen life from the rough as well, a member of the Legion of Frontiersmen. He has it on a good many of us both ways from the Jack. But does that matter at the Camp-Fire, either to him or to us? Not a bit. Why should it? He's merely one of us. Last time he talked to us he told us a simple story of the rough early days of New Zealand and the South Seas. This time he hopes he can find among us some who will be intrested in his present scientific work in the folk-lore of an extinct race.

AND he can. A man can find among us at least a few who are interested in whatever specialty interests him, learned or of the earth earthy. Of my own personal knowledge I can name off a dozen of you who fairly wallow in folk-lore or the histories and customs of ancient or vanished peoples. One or two of these are recognized authorities in the learned world, though I can think of only one who has dabbled in the early ages of New Zealand. There must be hundreds more of you and perhaps some of you will write to comrade Andrew and maybe add to the many personal friendships that have grown out of our Camp-Fire meetings—often enough friendships between men who have never met. And here I've gone and talked more than W. Andrew has! I'm a poor toastmaster.

Wharemouku, Upper Plain,
Masterton, New Zealand.

Inventory of writer:

"We come of a hardy Northern race
For of Yorkshire Blood are we
Where the Esk so brown, thro' Whitby town,
Runs out into the gray North Sea."

Fathered in 1860 by a parson C. E., one time Fellow of Lincoln, M. A. etcet.; senior of his year at Oxford; winner of Champion Sculls—a man of theories and much mentality. Mother—York blood; educated in Normandy; musical; painter; French as native to her as English.

WRITER, eldest son, worse luck, as all the Dad's theories were tried over on my person, my younger brothers only getting those that succeeded. Result at ten years: the binomial theorem and differential calculus were intimate acquaintances; quadratic equations were an article of diet, the Eton Latin Grammar as a Bible; French was more colloquial than Saxon; fairy tales were unknown but one had reveled in Greek and Roman mythology and was on speaking terms with Plato, Virgil,

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Æschylus and Herodotus, but multiplication, etc., and English grammar were not invented.

Subsequent eight years were spent in forgetting what one knew and learning stuff of every-day use. Was intended for a physician but shied. Shied worse at divinity and turned land surveyor. That brought me in touch with Nature—and one's earlier training came in useful. The native race of New Zealand attracted me. They, too, have their mythology, and it agrees with that of the Phenician. Now surveying days are over, sheep farming done; resting on one's oars and endeavoring to put on paper the folk lore of an almost extinct race. Camp-Fire can warm up one's feelings, and among those around and in the circle one will find sympathizers and well wishers.

The yarn of the brig *Elizabeth* was sent as an envoy—more to follow if it pleases you.

Remember it pleases the old man to relive some of his life again when the Dominion was young. Maybe his style needs polish, likely it is rough; be that as it may, he writes for the sheer love of writing. *Ave atque Vale.*—6980 L. F.—W. ANDREW.

PRESTER JOHN and Ghengis Khan—adventure, mystery. In this issue we—but read Mr. Lamb's story and see for yourself. Here is what he has to tell us about the legends and history back of his tale:

Judging by general experience it must be pretty hard to follow a will o' the wisp—whatever that may be. And it's just about as hard to get hold of the truth in the myth of Prester John.

ON ONE hand we have stories of the European travelers who declared that a Christian monarch in Asia ruled a kingdom of fabulous wealth. That was around the tenth to the thirteenth century.

Then we have the travels of Jesuit and Nestorian monks, among them Fra Rubugin, who visited one or two Asian rulers who embraced Christianity. We know that before the time of Marco Polo there were Christian centers in "Tangut" and Hsi'en fu. Also, it is curious to learn that Christian engravings were found on the stone ruins of Karakorum, the oldest city of Tatary. Abulghazi, the oriental historian, mentions a Christian monarch in Asia.

Next, history tells us that the daughter of A-Wang-khan was a Christian and married a khan whose father was "Great King John" in Chinese. Ghenghis Khan was surprised by the riches of the Gur-khan's "golden tents" and "golden dishes fit for an emperor." Marco Polo says this man was the one reported in Europe to be Prester John.

The legend has curious details—a scepter of pure emerald, a treasure guarded by trained animals, a castle by a sea of sand, and a river of stones.

LASTLY we learn that the descendants of the Gur-khan were last seen at Kuku-Khotan, some 300 miles northwest of Peking. This is in the north of the once powerful Kerait or Krit Horde. And Krit is a Mongol name for Christian. But as Kuku-Khotan locates itself in the Kobi (Gobi) desert, it seemed better to move it to Changa Nor, the "lake of stones by the sea of sand."

The legend of Prester John of Tatary is one of the hidden by-ways of history. But, like other by-paths, it rewards any one who explores it.

One other point. The hunting of Gurd is a fact, and is actually carried out by the Yakuts and Tungusi of today.—HAROLD LAMB.

QUITE a while ago we telephoned the New York post-office and were told that packages and second-class mail-matter addressed to *individuals* could be sent to those serving with Allied forces but not to our own men. Consequently I told some of our comrades at the front, who wrote me for magazines and sometimes other things, that I couldn't send them. Postal regulations had undergone various changes from time to time and naturally I accepted the ruling from the post-office direct. Inquiring around, however, I found that other people were sending things that reached individuals. Finally I wrote the post-office who referred the letter to the Chief Clerk of the Railway Mail Service and he wrote me promptly that there were no restrictions against sending second-class mail to individuals in the A. E. F.

But in the meantime I'd turned down some requests that I didn't want to turn down. All I can do now is to square myself with these comrades by explaining how it happened.

HERE is an interesting talk from one of the West's old-timers. As the writer suggested, I've sent his letter on to Uncle Frank and I'm willing to bet my last cent that Uncle Frank will have a good time reading it. I did. So will you.

If some of the words are spelled wrong it's because our friend's writing is nearly as bad as mine and I didn't know enough to guess from the context. As he hasn't specifically given me permission to use his name, I'm signing his letter "Z. Z." And I'm hoping Z. Z. will be giving us more of his experiences at future Camp-Fires.

In your August number I read Uncle Frank Huston's letter about Indians, and I have not made the sign of which he speaks, but I greet him and you with the tribal sign of the Sioux, i.e. the right front finger down across the throat. Also I have hammered my shirt front and passed the same finger high above my head and backward and down. ("I am a Big Chief.")

IT IS mid-August and dog days—no wonder we remember. Yes, I knew Plenty Coups, knew him too well. He was Peace Chief of the Absaraka (Crows). After the great Sioux war was ended, Plenty Coups, Two Bears and Red Fox, all three

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Absaraka chieftains, did me the great honor to common name me "Costa Cot Echecta Nocka," which in English means "a colt." Spotted Elk, who was a war chief of the Ogallalla Sioux, called me "Little Guts"! In the far northwest I was named—and called by all who knew me (of the Red Brotherhood of course) "Colee Cuetin," meaning "Race Horse."

To those who have any doubts whatever of Uncle Frank's veracity, I have passed the sign of both hands in front, with fingers passing through and through, which is war, commonly meaning "Come and mix it up with me." The custom of smoking per ritual is always opened by blowing first a little puff upward. It is to the Great Spirit, and then the pipe is passed to the next in rank or to the stranger. No good Indian is guilty of beginning a conversation in a hurry, sometimes sitting in silence for hours.

I HAVE danced the Dog-liver, the Buffalo, Bear, and the Medicine Dance, Clattawa Salmon, Clattawa Clam, Hiack Clattawa Boston Mam, many times amongst the "Hated Fish Eaters" or "Salt —(?)," who are Siwash pure and simple; but the sun dance of the Sioux, not I! As the Cockney said, it's too bleeding brutal for me!

Apropos "Roping the Squaws," Plenty Coups once asked me to be his guest at a dog-eating contest on Rocky Fork of the Yellowstone (which is also known as Clark's Fork, and Red Lodge in its head waters). Two Bears and his tribe from ——(?) Creek was there. A band of young bucks had just returned from a raid on the Piegans, who brought with them amongst other loot a pale-faced young squaw, who by her moccasins seemed to be a Blackfoot breed. Old "Plenty" led her out for my inspection, and said his son would marry her—his son was Cut Knee, a crippled medicine-man. The girl was "roped" above the knees with rawhide thongs and I had a notion to cut her loose, but even a Crow will defend his rights, so I decided on a little strategy.

WOLF-TOOTH SMITH, a white man, lived at Farewell Bend and I told Plenty that Wolf-Tooth was my friend and I would go get fire-water and tobacco for the feast. He let me go. That night I returned with two gallons of 40-rod whisky and a horse that was good for a hundred miles from sun to sun. The one I rode was also a long distance horse known as Ace of Clubs.

Old Plenty was a good Christian then, but he got full of the booze just the same, and when it was almost daylight I crawled out of my saddle blankets, and sent a boy to bring my horses, which were both picketed near by. The camp was sound asleep except a few who had eaten too much dog the night before.

I WALKED into the old chief's teepee, after my horse was brought, shook him up and got a drink of the whisky, then smoked a cigaret with him, puff and puff about. He had the squaw staked out in the teepee; in addition to the thongs above her knees he had added a rope around her neck. The old hog went to sleep again and I cut the hobbles and rope loose from her, and then walked out to my horse. She soon followed with some blankets and a big knife which she had taken from among Plenty's private possessions. Some two or three old squaws and a few boys and dogs tried to stop her but I used my rawhide quirt and she managed to mount Wolf-Tooth's horse. I slid into the saddle just as Cut Knee came out of his teepee and I yelled back at him, "You slept too late!"

PLENTY'S young men gave us a great old run, but the Blackfoot queen was game and more than half white. That day we swam the Yellowstone at Pease's Bottoms near Stillwater, then we followed up the Yellowstone to the Big Timber Creek, and camped that night in the Crazy Mts.

She was, so she told me, a Bitter Root Blackfoot from the Flathead country. The Piegans had stolen her, and then the Crows, but she said that never before had she been stolen by a white man and I of course tried to explain that my action was platonic but she never could understand. We had ridden a hundred miles or more perhaps, but she staked the horses, got the wood and then stood guard and guard without once reminding me of her troubles. Say, when I think of that squaw as compared to some civilized women I have known, I feel like Uncle Frank says, "Hi ho, I wish I was young again, and those days were back!"

BUT, alas, I am old and I sit here alone in my guard house by the side of the railroad track, and dream dreams of the olden golden days of youth when to steal a band of horses or a good-looking female was only a common amusement among us renegades from civilization.

I yet remember most of the sign language, also Hudson Bay or Chinook Jargon, which is the *lingua Franca* of the Northwest. . . . I would make you the sign of the Race Horse (or "to Ride"), but I am a worse artist than I am a penman; but place your left first and second finger astride of your right hand and then make the hand go swiftly forward.—Z. Z.

THAT whale steak this comrade offers me sounds good. My thanks to him, and I'd certainly take a chance if I could get at it. Also he gives us a recipe for cooking rice, and I've asked him to tell us his methods for smoking trout and for other camp dishes. The pictures he refers to are, of course, those Mr. Tuttle drew of the characters in his own stories.

Victoria, B. C.

Your letter of June 4th arrived at Port Alice on the boat I left on so I missed it. After following me for three weeks I got it at Kynvuot whaling station on the west coast of the Island. I was very sorry to hear of your illness and was wishing you were with me to see the beautiful sights along the northwest coast. I had whale steak for dinner that day. I couldn't help but think of the difference in the surroundings from you back in an office in little old N. Y.

A WHALING station sure has a flavor all its own. The little whaling boats brought in eight whale while I was there, and it is quite a sight to go through the plant.

They can parts of the whale for food, which very much resembles beef, and very tender. I have been through most of the salmon canneries along

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the coast which are working to full capacity now.

I am going to inclose a newspaper clipping of a typical old Western adventurer. I have had several talks with him and greatly enjoy his tales.

FROM where I sit I can look across the water and see Mt. Baker and I guess that fellow that was looking for adventure would still find it as wild as when David Ogilvy made his trip to the summit. I got my mid-September issue of *Adventure* last night and was sure overjoyed at the pictures. Ain't they the tough bunch, though, to all be alive after all the shooting scraps they have been in? *Chuck* sure looks like a liar, and *Telescope* has a conceited look.

BY THE way, I have noticed that when any one asks what to take in the way of grub on a trip to the hills, they are generally told among other things to take rice, but I have never noticed that they told how to cook it. Now every one in the West knows you can't tell an old sour-drug anything about cooking, as they all think they know it all, but I will give my recipe for a few camp-dishes for the benefit of any younger members of Camp-Fire:

RICE—Boil the rice at night. In the morning take half the cold boiled rice and fry in the frying-pan in bacon grease after taking up the bacon. Mix the other half of cold boiled rice in some dough batter and fry in pan. These make excellent flap-jacks and nourishing. I always take dried apples and seedless raisins with me. I mix half and half and stew together, as I find the raisins will sweeten the apples sufficiently without sugar. When a person is eating lots of wild game they soon crave sweets and tarts and these dried apples and raisins just hit the spot.

DESICCATED potatoes or onions can be bought from Hudson's Bay store at Winnipeg. They are put up in five-pound tins. A five-pound tin will last two men on a sixty-day trip. A table-spoonful will make rations for two men.

If any one wishes it I will give my recipes for smoking trout and other dishes for the camp. I would like to tell you some incidents concerning my work here, but can not at the present time, but want you to know I am trying hard to do my bit.—CARLETON F. CRIPPEN.

AMERICANS in the Canadian forces. Who is going to sing their song as it should be sung, the song of the men who did not wait for America to enter the fight for humanity and freedom but rolled up their sleeves and went into it on their own? We'd always rather see Americans fighting under the American flag, but these men, and those other Americans under the banners of France, England and other Allies, went ahead of the flag and it is no trouble to forgive them for it.

Many of them were veterans against the Hun before the first soldiers of our Expeditionary Forces landed on French soil. Veterans or lying under that same French soil. Thousands and thousands and thousands of them, many of them later in our own service, but many staying with our Allies. And all we heard about them was the little casualty-list the papers published every day of "Americans killed with the Canadians," the reports of friends, letters to our Camp-Fire from our many comrades among them.

And they have done more than fight the Hun. They have very particularly cemented the bonds of friendship among what we call the Anglo-Saxon people. Adventurers? Yes.

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom, R. N. Wall rises and introduces himself. His tale in this issue is his second, not his first, story in our magazine, but it's not his fault that he did not speak on the first occasion:

Richmond, Va.

Thank you for your invitation to join the "Camp-Fire." I want to say that I enjoy that part of *Adventure* as much, or perhaps more, than anything else in it; but as for myself, I "never had no adventures much." Which reminds me that, coming downtown on the car the other day with a very distinguished lady whom I know slightly, she asked me where I was educated. I looked her woodenly in the face and said: "I ain't never had no education much," and waited for her to grin. She never cracked her face and then I did feel foolish.

However, it is true that my life has been humdrum compared with most of your writers, for it has been spent mostly in the plow business. Not but what there are any number of good business stories worth telling—I have told a number of them already in *Everybody's*, *Munsey's*, *Collier's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, etc., but my trouble now is to find the time to write them down. My responsibilities have increased a great deal lately, I am away much of the time, and, while matching wits with big buyers is a lot of fun, after a deal is made it leaves one more in a mood for recreation than for writing. I don't know that this material would interest you much, anyhow, although most editors seem to prefer it to the stuff about burglars, bartenders and pirates that I should much rather write. Of course, I have sense enough to realize that, knowing more about the plow business than about the other vocations above mentioned, I am likely to do it more convincingly, but, all the same, writing the others is much more interesting and restful.—R. N. WALL.

IF SOME gifted statistician could find the number of miles each member of our Camp-Fire has traveled outside the land of his birth and could add all those miles together, well, he'd have to turn to astronomy to illustrate how long a journey it would make. I'm no astronomer but

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I know that the little twinkling stars are quite a distance away. Once I heard a lecture on astronomy and all I can remember is this: The fastest traveler—faster than light or electricity—is the nerve message from any part of the human body to the brain, yet the distance between the earth and a fixed star is so great that, if a man's body were so long his head could be on the star and yet he could be sitting on a red-hot stove on the earth, he wouldn't know he'd been burned until he'd been dead two hundred years.

For example, here's one of us who's been around quite a lot:

Berkhamsted, England.

I have read our magazine for some years and in many places. Those "many places" include England, Ireland, the U. S., all Canada, Northern and Southern Siberia, Cuba, Jamaica, the small West Indian Islands, Canal Zone, British Honduras, Venezuela, the Orinoco, all of Colombia, British and Dutch Guiana, Curaçao, British Gold Coast, the Canaries, Newfoundland, and *all* the Central American republics. For one only thirty-five that is rather good going, don't you think?—T. G. Effrey.

Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas. In these eight States aliens who have filed their first papers are given all the rights of citizenship, including that of voting for President and representatives in Congress. How nice for the Germans!

Incidentally, it must be a little hard on a loyal, American-born woman, who has sent a husband, brother or sons to the war against Germany and has done her own loyal bit of war-work at home, to see an alien enemy go through the "scrap of paper" first-papers formality and help decide by the ballot who shall rule America, when said loyal American woman is not allowed this privilege.

Somehow I'm glad I don't live in any of these States. Do you?

A COMRADE in Dutch Guiana sends us a poem by another comrade down there which will bring many a member of our Camp-Fire a grin and maybe a pang. I haven't the heart to mutilate it by taking the cuss-words out of it and am trusting you'll forgive this breach of our Camp-Fire rule.

Moenco Mines.
Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana.

Emboldened by listening to many tales while sitting around your Camp-Fire, I venture to say that however gripping may be the lure of the Tropics, or however thrilling the adventure in jungle or town, there is something in the feeling when you are going "back to God's country" that is like no other, and that more than one American in the Tropics will agree with Mr. Barnett in the enclosed lines he was kind enough to give me, and which seemed to me to be too expressive to remain buried among his business papers. They gave me a good laugh. May they bring a smile to your face.—Leslie Ashley.

HOMEWARD BOUND

by A. J. BARNETT, JR.

WIDE the waves are washing
O'er the ocean green,
White the clouds are floating,
Blue the sky between.

Porpoises a-playing,
Flying-fish a-skim;
Dim the distant mainland
At the water's rim.

Brisk the breeze is breaking
From a cooler main,
Bless the ship that's taking
Me to Home again.

Let us make a *festa*
Order 'round a dram,
And to all the Tropics
Drink a fervid "Damn."

Damn the stinks and fevers!
Damn the heat and sweat!
Damn the yellow rivers!
Damn the jungles wet!

Damn the gray savannas!
Damn the endless rain!
Damn the damn mosquitoes!
Damn them ALL—again!

Ah! the thought of parting
Fills the heart with joy.
Once again the beakers;
Quick about it, boy!

'At a stuff, old steward!
Hats off, fellows! now,
All together, standing:
BROADWAY!—BASEBALL!—WOW!!!

SOME more interesting information on the Navajos and Pueblos. When, in some later issue, you read Hugh Pendexter's novelette, "Carson of Taos," you'll be meeting the Navajos and some of these same facts again. Also that very stirring and historic figure, Kit Carson.

Gallup, N. M.

It has struck me that perhaps a little more information in regard to Navajo and Pueblo Indians might not be amiss, as many people seem to have rather hazy ideas in regard to them.

IT IS believed that the Navajo came into this country about seven hundred years ago, probably crossing from Asia by way of Bering Straits and steadily worked South in search of that warm country that legends told them about. Indeed the

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Navajos have a legend to this day that they came out of a great hole in the world in the North, and good Navajos expect to go back when they die. Also there is said to be a trible of Indians in Northern Canada whose language is practically the same as that of the Navajos. (I have not been able to verify this report.)

IT IS a fact not generally known that the Apache Indians are a branch of the Navajos, (the fighting branch, I might add), who were separated about five hundred years ago. The Navajo never was much of a fighting man; in comparison with the other Indians of the West, he was a pilfering, marauding, petty nuisance, but whenever he met other tribes on equal terms he always got the worst of it. When Carson rounded up the Navajos in 1863 he defeated a party of them at Red Rock Springs, about twenty miles from here, and also a larger party at Cañon de Chelly, not far from here.

In all, about twenty-five thousand were rounded up and taken to Bosco Redondo, where they were kept for several years, but so many of them died from confinement that the medicine men (who are the chiefs of the Navajos) begged to be allowed to return to their home country and signed treaties with the United States agreeing to be good. There was, however, one chief who did not surrender but retreated into the wilds near Navajo Mountain, one Hos-ki-ninni (don't know if I have this spelled right but that is the way it sounds) and these Indians have never recognized the authority of the United States to this day, and believe me they are certainly wild, more like the Apaches of old.

THE Navajo does not take kindly to white men's ways, only in as far as his immediate gain is concerned. I have seen many young men and women, who had been educated in government schools most of their lives and taught housekeeping, farming, etc., who upon being married became more dirty and lazy than the rest and who pretended not to understand English.

The Navajo is a fairly satisfactory laborer, excepting that one never knows when he will show up for work, especially if there happens to be a "sing" or dance going on in the neighborhood. There are various kinds of these "sings," some for pleasure and others ceremonial or religious. The pleasure "sings" are merely Navajo parties, but the religious "sings," such as the Ye-bit-chia, are taken from the Pueblo ceremonials.

In passing, will say that the Navajo is intensely loyal to his religion or belief, and that I have yet to see a truly converted Navajo, many overzealous missionaries to the contrary.

FROM this you will no doubt conclude that I am prejudiced against Navajos, but such is not the case. I have met many tribes of Indians and of all the Navajo is the most interesting. Confront one with a broken promise, and he will give you a most ingenious and naïve explanation, at the same time smiling hopefully, and if you do not believe it he feels hurt. He has a great sense of humor, and does not hold a grudge for long.

NOW in regard to the Pueblos, I shall confine myself to the ancient people who were the ancestors of the present Pueblos, as their customs have not changed much in five hundred years.

Several archæological societies (of which I have the honor of being a more or less valued member) have made some very interesting discoveries, a few of which I will give here.

First, did you know that the first authentic written history of the United States was written less then forty miles from here? Fact.

Fra Marcos De Niza reached Zuñi in 1539 and wrote of his discoveries which was the cause of Coronado's expedition in 1540. He told of the seven cities of Cibola of which Zuñi was and still is one.

WHEN Coronado reached Zuñi in 1540 he heard of fabulous cities far off to the north and at once sent out an expedition of four men to take them in the name of the king. Think of it! Four men across hundreds of miles of hostile country! These men came to the present Hopi towns and the natives were so overcome at the sight of the "Iron-Shirts" that the places fell with very little fighting. This expedition afterward reached the Grand Cañon of Arizona an returned to Zuñi but did not find the rich cities for the simple reason that there were no rich cities such as they were looking for. The commander's name was Captain Tovar.

WHEN an archæological expedition were excavating the ancient ruins at Zuñi during 1917 they found undeniable evidence of three different periods, each ruin having been built upon the other. Assuming that each period of occupation was of as long duration as the one we have record of it would make this Pueblo nearly two thousand years old.

The pottery of the second period seems to show the highest point of development of the tribe, but at all periods they were pottery makers, basket weavers farmers and weavers of cloth from fiber plants. They have raised corn and beans and other plants from time of record, and much of the corn and beans they raise at present are of the same strain that was planted at first.

Their corn was ground on stone *metate* or mortars and some of them are still in use. They had domesticated the wild turkey and used them for food as well as ceremonial purposes. These and the wild game of the country constituted their food supply.

THE Pueblos were not afraid of their dead as is the Navajo but buried them close to the living place usually on the eastern side for they were and are yet to a certain extent sun-worshippers. The dead were always given dishes of food and drink to speed them on their way to the unknown.

They were the first to take up the weaving of blankets or rugs, also the making of silver bracelets and beads, although some people give the Navajo credit for this. The first blankets were woven from yarn secured by undoing Spanish shawls and capes, and are called Bayeta blankets. They are almost priceless.

THE similarity of customs and language leads me to believe that the Pueblos were originally of the same race probably of different clans and that the difference in language is due to local conditions.

Indeed the clan system is still in vogue and it is seldom that members of one Pueblo will marry outside of their own. There is no doubt that they were directly connected with the civilization of Old

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Mexico but of course they had about the same relation to the splendors of Mexico as the desert has to the gilded palaces of New York.

In conclusion the Pueblos are loyal to their religion, and while they will go to the white man's church to please him if he is a good fellow, they still believe they are right, as witness any of their ceremonial dances.—H. W. BROSE.

TO FIND at the end of a letter a signature that I can't read always irritates me. How can you answer it if you don't know who wrote it? No, don't laugh, any of you who've had letters from me, for I'm going to say it myself.

I write some thousands of letters of one kind or another in a year. My full signature seems to be legible enough, judging from experience. But a good while ago I fell into the habit, when writing to some of you with whom I'd already got acquainted, of signing just my initials. Saved time and was less formal. But the habit grew till I signed only initials in most cases.

Every little while comes a letter referring rather caustically to an unknown individual who signed some unknown initials to a letter from our office. And, when I look at my initials as I sign them, I don't wonder. I couldn't read them myself. I've seldom seen a worse signature. You can't say anything worse about them than I can.

BUT it does save quite a bit of time in a year, and it certainly is less formal, and a habit is a hard thing to throw off. Particularly, if you can't write very clearly anyhow. Also it's partly your fault that I haven't reformed, for some of you began opening your letters to me with "Dear A. S. H." and, well, I liked it.

So, while I own up that it's a poor signature, I'm not promising to reform. But I want to make it very clear that there's "no disrespect intended."

THIS comrade is wrong in thinking he does not belong to Camp-Fire as actively as any of us. Every one who sits down with us, every one who drops in at our meetings, is an active member in full standing. There are no formalities or requirements except the desire to join.

Where is Clifford Sands? I don't know. Do any of you? I know that, after his expedition fell through, he was in a Central American revolution, was badly shot in one or both hands, returned to the States and tried, through our magazine, to get into touch with all who'd been interested in the proposed expedition. I heard both from him and of him from others who had seen him in Central America or later in the States. But I haven't had word for a long time and would be glad to hear from him again.

Portland, Oregon.

Though not belonging to the Camp-Fire actively, I am heartily with it and would like to let you know some of my little experiences in the South Sea Islands in which I spent most of the last five years.

I ONLY wish I was endowed with the power to tell interestingly what I went through. Just the same I can refute quite a lot wrong impressions that most people have, from reading Jack London and E. Darling literature on Tahiti and surrounding islands.

About five years ago, or to be more exact, in July, 1913, a certain Clifford Sands of Seattle was organizing an expedition for Cuzco, Peru, and after getting acquainted with him through *Adventure* and binding myself to go with him, we lost track of each other as the police stepped in and declared the expedition filibustering. I took it for granted that I should go my way and instead went then to Tahiti and stayed there since. I have been through a lot there from the days the Germans bombarded the town of Papeete and certainly ought to know as much as anybody else on that part of the world. I shall be glad to answer any of the Camp-Fire who would like to know what to expect of those places, the Society and Pomotu groups. I read an item of Mr. Mills' answer on the South Seas out of which a man can get a pretty good introduction to the Islands.

AS FOR myself I think I shall be going this next week to Sydney, Australia, but friends here would forward anything that comes to my address as long as they can keep track of me.

By the way, I would be very grateful to you if you could give me a chance to get into communication with the Clifford Sands of Seattle of which I spoke above, not for money matters' sake, as I gladly let my share go, but to see if he turned out again on the same Peruvian adventure that he intended to start in July, 1915.—E. MAYES.

P. S.—Here is also a salute for the comrades who have made their way across the Great Divide.

CONCERNING his story in this issue Hugh Kennedy gives us the following glimpse behind the scenes:

Victoria, B. C.

The setting of "A Gentled Burley," is in reality laid along the right-of-way of the cut-off built by the C. P. R. around Ottertail Hill and along the Kicking Horse River, just west of Field, B. C. I saw it last August on my return from England. I helped to tamp the big charge in the coyote hole myself about fifteen years ago, and I watched it go off, too.—HUGH KENNEDY.

METAL Identification Cards. When sending in your quarter for one please do not expect to get the same number on

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your metal card as you had on your old paper card. It can't be done, as you will realize when you think it over. For how could we know in advance exactly which of the old holders would want metal cards? And it will simplify matters if you destroy your old card on receiving this metal one, notifying us to that effect. It is not required, but otherwise you'll be registered under two different numbers, which might bring about complications.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

MORE ABOUT FIREARMS

Various Information from Camp-Fire Members Concerning Firearms of Today and Yesterday—Automatics *vs.* Revolvers, the Webley-Fosbery, the Colt, Other Makes, the Percussion Cap, the When, What and How of Using a Gun

SO MANY of you have written in in response to the talk by D. Wiggins and L. F. Brown on firearms at a recent Camp-Fire that we're giving at least some of these letters grouped together here. They give added information and, of course—since "gun cranks" are as "sot" as are all the rest of us on our particular hobbies—differences of opinions. That is what we expected and wanted. So far as space permits, this is an open discussion. Join in, if you can add some more information or want to argue with some other comrade.

For years we've considered a regular department devoted to firearms. Some day we may have one, but "Ask Adventure" is divided according to geographical areas and a gun division doesn't fit in well. In the meantime a lot of experts are giving us much the same thing as a department.

To begin with, here is a letter on the rapidity and accuracy of automatic *vs.* revolver and other matters, such as the particular needs of particular moments:

———, California

Wiggins' list is very complete and accurate, although accuracy in writing of American firearms is only a comparative term. His only noticeable omission is the Remington-Elliott four-barrel hammerless improvement of the Sharps four-barrel derringer. Here we see the growth of inaccuracies—Derringer was a Philadelphia gunsmith but we now give his name to short, properly heavy caliber, pocket arms, just as we pervert Monckey's name in his invention, the monkey-wrench. Derringer's rifles were highly prized—and priced—prior to the '60s.

I HAVE been collecting old one-hand arms for many years and with them all available firearm literature and frequently find a piece not mentioned in any written matter and with patent and manufacturing dates at variance with most published data, other than a digest of firearm patents that I acquired a few years ago.

Wiggins goes splitting hairs when he says that he "Has never seen an automatic fired as rapidly as a good revolver can be shot." I don't know what he has seen, but I have seen a demonstrator grasp an automatic with one hand and tickle the trigger with the other and fire it faster than any revolver can possibly be fired. We are talking of speed, not accuracy. Speed is the automatic's first name. Any arm that will function with only the movement of the trigger, and that only necessary to be displaced one-eighth of one inch, can be fired more rapidly than an arm where the trigger movement is in excess of five-eighths of an inch. Q. E. D. A Colt single action can be fanned to fair speed, but the hand movement approximates six inches to each discharge.

DON is also all blowed up when he says he can shoot as well with an automatic as any one he ever saw and still questions hitting a man at thirty feet. Now I know that D. Wiggins, late of Ducor (that's short for Dutch Corners) and now of O'Regon, has seen Old Man Chester and that said O. M. C. is not an automatic expert nor advocate, but said O. M. C. is still able to keep eighty-five per cent. of auto bullets in a ten-inch circle at thirty yards (not feet).

Now we are all liable to get fussed up about this hurry-up stuff with one-hand guns. I'd rather a man shot ten shots in a second at me than to have him hit me once, and, inversely, I'd rather hit my target, as near center as possible, than be able to beat the clock.

I BEGAN learning six-gun work in 1883 and had the advantage of an instructor of great ability and considerable experience. Many a night on desert and mountain I have listened to his lectures on the ethics of defense and attack, the effect of temper and temperament and the probable result of natural impulses, and these talks, together with his example in several instances, were of far greater value than the manual training he gave me. He used to insist, "Be as quick as you can, but be sure first." His method, if he actually set out to get a man, was to be certain to anger his adversary and he had a manner of laughing, when he was especially dangerous, that would anger the devil. He said it was safe to take the first shot from an angry man, for he would miss or "only peel the bark" and then one had a clear case of self-defense and the

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sympathy of the neutral element of the crowd. I've seen more six-shooter killings than I like to remember and all bear out the old scout's precept, "be sure," rather than trying to see how much noise you can make.

NOW for the first, quick, accurate shot, at any pistol range, the old leg or belt-holster and single-action Colt is premier. Training with one of these is in line with training with a single-shot rifle at game—one soon becomes accustomed to depend on the first shot and not on the reserve. Double-action revolvers, in the large calibers, never appealed to me. A man with a large, powerful hand may be able to fire one with speed and accuracy, but with training he could do as well with a single-action, for if he is accurate he will shift his aim with each shot and there is full time to function a S. A. while one swings to the next target. At short ranges given time and practise to become thoroughly accustomed to the gun, one comes to shoot instinctively and without conscious aim and is accurate to a degree according to diligence of practise and natural adaptiveness. Here the one-gun man shines.

The automatic finds its proper place in the Army or in an attack or defense where arms may be drawn and made ready and held in hand until time for use. Then the greater number of available shots and the ease and rapidity of reloading give the automatic the preference over any other one-hand firearm. Only the .45 or the more powerful though less paralyzing .38 are worth considering for man-stopping purposes.

IF YOU are going out to get a man, or a bunch, the first thing to consider is how to be surest, and the environment. If I desired a certain scalp and had no fear of outside interference, I would select an eight-bore shotgun, loaded to Chester's taste, then as the fear of interference grew I would reduce weight of ordnance but would always carry the biggest piece of armament I could manipulate and figure to put a full stop to the performance with the first shot. I once grew much attached to a .32-20 Colt S. A. until I tried it at a pile of lumber and found that a hollow-point metal-jacket bullet penetrated nine ceiling boards without deformation. I concluded that they would slip through a man too easily and might rouse his fighting spirit!

It is almost certain that no severe gunshot wound is painful on infliction. Nine buckshot at close range didn't hurt—then, but some small shot in the south elevation as I was traveling due north once spurred me to supreme exertion—only the sound of the second barrel overtook me.

When a gun must be carried for protection from surprise attack and must be kept hidden because of the "speech of people;" where the action will be restricted to feet (ten or less) instead of yards; where the attack will be pulled off with you at the greatest disadvantage and where you may be opposed by a gang instead of an individual, then, as Pat said "The best gun is a handy club." Lacking the club, your life may depend on the instant availability of your firearm and instant action bars the automatic, unless you risk your own and your friends' safety by carrying it unsafe. Here I hold, first, for a sawed-off .45 Colt S. A.; second, a .38 Smith and Wesson hammer or hammerless (I have both, the hammer gun with the barrel cut to two inches and the ear of the hammer ground off); and third, to one or more .41 derringers, single or double barrel—each in accordance with the sufficiency of the clothing I am wearing to hide the armament. If I can get one of the old model double-action .41 center-fire Colts, the one with the rounded grip and long but easy action, I may add that to my list for its two-hundred-grain bullet and twenty-one grains of powder are more shocking than the more pointed and lighter bullets of the Smith and Wesson .38.

To make the whole story short, as my old teacher used to sum it up, "It's not so much the gun that a man carries as it is the man carrying it."

—G. L. CHESTER.

Incidentally, a letter received today from D. Wiggins bemoans the fact that he had been drafted after eight earnest attempts to enlist. Cheer up, comrade. You did your darndest and you're in the game you tried to get in. Those are the things that really count.

The next is a letter from South Carolina, from another man who grew up with guns and loves them. And a man whose patriotism bears the test of personal disappointments. No other kind is much good.

Graniteville, S. C.

Have read with a great deal of pleasure the article on firearms in the last *Adventure*. It is a subject in which I am deeply interested and one which I enjoy. Many of the arms mentioned I either own or am familiar with.

AMONG those in my gun-cabinet are the following: Remington .22 single shot for the boys; Savage .22 automatic for myself; .32-20 Winchester; .38-40 Winchester; 250-3000 Savage for the madam; .30-40 model 1895 Winchester box magazine; regulation Krag rifle; regulation Springfield, model 1903 for 1906 ammunition; Colt's .22 target revolver; Colt's .25 automatic, my wife's standby; .32 Smith and Wesson Special with wood grips; .32-20 Smith and Wesson target revolver; .38 special Smith and Wesson with wood grips, my constant companion, also another with rubber grips to use in an emergency; .41 Remington double-derringer, in my pocket now; .44 Smith and Wesson Russian target; .45 Colt's automatic Government model; L. C. Smith double hammerless shotgun.

Of course I have some others, and this list I hope will soon be added to, as there are several other makes and calibers that I need, without mentioning the ones I want.

Still I think I have a fairly comprehensive assortment and one that will answer to the necessities. Furthermore I have a fairly adequate supply of ammunition for each of them, and I reload for some and will reload for more of them whenever I can get my orders filled.

I HAVE handled firearms ever since I was a little shaver—in fact had a .22 rifle before I had an air-gun. When I was afraid to sleep upstairs because our house was haunted they gave me a saber which a cousin of mine who was killed

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during the Civil War used, and I would sleep anywhere or go anywhere when I had it with me. The coldest and darkest of nights I would hug it to my bosom and sleep without any fear. Later my father gave it to a nearer kinsman of my cousin and, though I have two sabers to take its place, I always miss it. I love my weapons, and, while some persons may not believe it, they appreciate being loved. When one gets into my cabinet it is there to stay. I talk to them and pet them, for who knows but that some day they may repay me for the care that I have given them?

About the first pistol I ever fired was one of a pair of flint-locks which my great-grandfather, an officer, used during the war of 1812. They are about the same size as a modern twelve-bore shotgun. I loaded one pretty heavy, put about a handful of buckshot in it and put a target on a gate and fired. After the smoke had subsided and I had recovered from the shock I discovered that the target had disappeared and the gate was almost a wreck. I quietly cleaned up the pistol, put it carefully away, and it was only a few years ago that my father learned what had happened to his gate.

I LEARNED to shoot with my grandfather's dueling pistols, single shot, percussion cap with folding triggers. I have them now, a beautiful relic of the times when men were men and settled their disagreements in a gentlemanly manner. I won't say anything about the success I had as I have since learned that cold science has proven that I could not do with them the things which I did do. I used to hunt for lead, mold my bullets and save my money for caps and powder. My boys, although I am trying to teach them to shoot, and they have much better opportunities than I ever had, will not, I am afraid, ever derive the real pleasure which I did from these old-timers.

SPEAKING of old-time weapons, a friend of mine once owned a breechloading flintlock rifle. He disposed of it before I had a chance of getting it. He also is a lover of guns and has nearly as many as I have. In giving my list I did not mention any of the antiques, of which I have several. Some are valuable only from sentiment. One or two I have been told are valuable otherwise.

I have to take most of my adventuring over a cigar and with a magazine or a book. It is true I dream my dreams. I am a hero of many wars and many adventures in these dreams. And it is surprising to see the number of these dreams which come true, only for the other fellow. Modern warfare hasn't a single new thing for me, my cherished dreams which were laughed at by the practical military men, are today becoming facts with the other fellow getting the credit. But what is the difference? The result is what I wanted, and since we get that I should worry.—JAS. L. QUIMBY, JR.

A brief word from Charles Beadle, of our writers' brigade, most of whose experience with firearms was, I think, gleaned in Africa:

New Orleans, La.

Am glad that your gun expert has scotched the crazy guys who will imagine that they can fire an automatic like a machine-gun in spite of trifles such as the recoil, etc.—CHAS. BEADLE.

And now here are Lloyd F. Brown and D. Wiggins themselves in a friendly argument referring back to their joint article that started all these discussions:

Allerton, Iowa.

In regard to the article on firearms, I feel that in justice to myself I must ask you to print the following statement as to my statement in this article that there is no such thing as an automatic revolver.

MR. WIGGINS says that there is an automatic revolver, "Mr. Brown to the contrary notwithstanding." The following is an extract from a letter written to me by Webley and Scott, Limited, Birmingham, England, manufacturers of the Webley-Fosbery automatic revolver, and in regard to the same:

"The Webley-Fosbery does not eject the shells, but with this exception the weapon is operated in exactly the same manner as the ordinary break-down revolver, that is to say, the breech is opened, six or eight cartridges inserted, and the hammer cocked, and on the discharge of the first cartridge the barrel and cylinder recoil, bringing the chamber opposite the hammer for the second shot, the hammer remaining at full cock, so that the revolver can only be said to be automatic in its action of firing."

WHILE this arm is partially automatic it can not be called an "automatic" in the sense that the term is used in connection with the popular automatic pistols in use today. Of course, it could be said that all modern revolvers are automatic in some ways. The modern double-action revolvers are automatic in ejecting the shells as much as the Webley-Fosbery; they are loaded one chamber at a time exactly as the above-mentioned arm; the pulling of the trigger of a double-action revolver turns the cylinder, cocks the hammer and fires the shot all with the one movement and they could be called automatic in this respect, but they are operated and function entirely differently from the automatic pistols in that they have revolving cylinders containing the cartridges while the pistol holds the cartridges in a spring-actuated magazine. Their frames are solid and remain so upon discharge, while the pistol has a slide that works backward and forward upon discharge and carries the cartridge from the magazine to the chamber. In fact, they are entirely different and to distinguish them from revolvers, which may have some automatic functions, they are termed automatic, which they are in nearly every sense, while the revolvers require more hand functioning. Hence I claim there is no such thing as an automatic revolver and I still continue to say so. The statement from the makers of the Webley-Fosbery revolver should be sufficient proof on this point that my ground is well taken.

I MIGHT mention here that in giving the names and descriptions of the revolvers we didn't state the number of cartridges they would hold. This might be of interest. This has been called to my attention by a story in which a sailor in the United States Navy emptied "the six shots from his .45 Colt automatic" at an enemy, whereas the Colt Government Model .45 automatic pistol shoots eight instead of six times.—LLOYD F. BROWN.

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From an officer at Plattsburg Barracks, citing the Webley again in issue with Mr. Brown. Also he takes issue, on the other hand, with D. Wiggins:

Plattsburg Barracks, N. Y.

I have read with a great deal of interest "Firearms, Old and New." It is refreshing to hear, or read rather, a reference to an automatic which does not refer to it as a "revolver." Now any one with the most elementary ideas of mechanics can easily see that there is nothing that revolves in the ordinary automatic pistol, yet nearly everybody calls them revolvers.

THERE is a mistake in the article in that there is, or at least was ten or fifteen years ago, an automatic revolver. The author evidently never saw a Webley automatic revolver. This weapon could be bought some years ago at various military uniform and supply houses. I was informed at that time that it was the side arm used by British officers. The force of the explosion drove the barrel and cylinder backward over the hammer in much the same manner as is done in driving barrel and slide in the modern Colt, the return movement, as I remember it, rotating the cylinder.

IT IS funny to see the prejudice of an old six-shooter man against the automatic. I myself was prejudiced. Years ago (well, not so very many years) I could "spin" or "fan" a six-shooter. I have spent many an hour, many a day, many a year when a boy, five or six miles from the northeast corner of nowhere out on the prairie, practising those gentle pastimes while the cows cropped the buffalo grass. But—the Colt automatic is as far ahead of the old "Frontier Model" as that was ahead of the flint-lock pistol.

True, its shorter barrel makes it somewhat less accurate than the old gun. But it sure is faster. And it is a poor stick of a man who can't put seven bullets into a silhouette of a man's trunk and head in five seconds with a little coaching at twenty-five yards.

Of course we all have our prejudices, but I was a little surprised at seeing such a "dark age" attitude in *Adventure*. To sum up my "kicks":

1. There is, or was, an automatic revolver.
2. The Army model automatic pistol, while it does not have quite the accuracy of the old six-shooter, due to its shorter barrel, still is accurate enough.
3. Only ignorance and prejudice will deny its speed.
4. It sure will "stop" a man about as quick as anything I ever saw—and I have seen several.

I can see plainly already that the argument between the exponents of the automatic *vs.* the friends of the six-shooter is going to be a big one. Here is another letter from an advocate of the automatic who also introduces us to a .36-caliber Colt.

Chicago, Illinois.

In the last issue I read the letter of Mr. Brown and Mr. Wiggins on firearms with a great deal of interest. They no doubt have had more experience than I, but I differ with them about shooting qualities of the automatic pistol. I believe the Colt automatic is as safe as a firearm can be made and as accurate as any revolver. The first five shots I ever fired with one I made forty-three out of a possible fifty at fifteen yards at U. S. military target. A great many people shoot low with it, but I believe it is because the revolvers they have been shooting have a tendency to shoot high and they hold low from habit. The .45 U. S. model has a stiff recoil and throws up—in my opinion in just the right position for the next shot.

In listing the different calibers of Colt revolvers they have omitted the .36 caliber. I owned the only one I ever saw. It is a six-shot center-fire. I could not obtain any cartridges for it and had Robert Hasslock, a gunsmith of Georgetown, Kentucky, bore the cylinder out for a .38. It had a seven and one-half inch octagon barrel and was the most accurate "gun" I ever owned.

—H. A. Wood.

Back into the past—a bit of information as to who was the inventor of the percussion cap:

Decatur, Georgia.

Your article on "Firearms, Old and New" was all O. K. I can add a little to it. The percussion cap was invented by Edwin Moody, the son of an English sea captain, in 1808 or 1809. He was born and reared at Sanburnton, New Hampshire. The records of the patent probably were burned when the patent office was destroyed in or about 1825. I can only refer you to a W. M. Edwards, 130A Peachtree Street, Atlanta, for more information, as he can possibly give you the dates more exact. And he also invented the circular saw.

—J. M. Clack.

Certainly the following letter will stir 'em up! Old-timers, this is up to you. How about it? *Did* the Colt revolver win the Great West? How about it, historians? A large subject, full of juicy meat for our Camp-Fire discussions and arguments. Come forward, exponents of the famous old Kentucky rifle and defend it against the rivalry of the Colt. Come forward, defenders of the Sharps. Get busy, advocates of the old .44 Winchester. Which gun did most to win the West?

Forest Hills, Long Island.

On page one hundred and eighty-two, August 3d issue, is made this statement *in re* Colt, inventor of Colt's revolver: "He was the man, more than any other, who made possible the rapid expansion of the United States in the years 1840-1890." A darn interesting statement, whether true or not! I wonder if the old-time Westerners who sit around the Camp-Fire won't rise to the occasion and give us their opinions about this? It is a moot question, you know. I've heard it argued pro and con until—well, till it was a cause for relief that wearing six-guns has gone out of style—except in the movies.

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PERSONALLY, I am "agin" the Colt theory. The Great West never could have been won by the six-shooter, and it is problematical whether it wouldn't have been won more quickly and creditably without it. The first requisite of the men who did the winning was a firearm that would lick the Indian, would fill the old meat-pot, and would stop old Mr. Grizzly B'ar (the gamest and ugliest fighter that ever trod this continent) and other predatory animals of size.

It would be interesting to know how many Indian fights were won with the short-ranged six-shooter. The old timers can tell us, but my suspicion is that most of them were won by the old Kentucky rifle (than which no truer shooting-iron ever was bored), the big Sharps buffalo gun (range up to one thousand yards), and the little .44 Winchester, model 1873, the busiest and most efficient of them all.

AS TO meat in the pot—a quite important item in pioneering—no one who has ever tried a revolver on deer, for instance, would contend that the Colt could have supplied the necessary, even in the game paradise of the Old West. The Union Pacific Railway was built on buffalo meat, and while some of it was shot from horseback with the short gun, the bulk of it necessarily was knocked over at good range with the rifle.

Many successful defenses against Indians undoubtedly were made with the revolver; many a starving pioneer party was saved by game killed with the six-gun. But not enough of either to have won and kept the West for the whites.

CONCERNING Mr. Grizzly B'ar, once king of the Western mountain States, he was just the boy to laugh at half a dozen Colt bullets and clout the head off the lad who fired them. But one long Sharps bullet, or a dozen .44s from a Winchester caused him to lie down and let the wheels of progress roll over him. Wolves, coyotes, cougars, etc., were killed down to civilization's needs mainly at rifle range.

"BUT", runs the Colt argument, "the Colt tamed the bad man." Yes, and it made him, too. The bad man was a man who happened to combine the lust for killing with quickness on the draw. The revolver gave him his opportunity. It made him; it was just what he needed. There would have been bad men a-plenty without the revolver, of course, but think it over—Can you imagine him without the six-gun—which made him possible?

How many good and needed men were killed in aimless rows because six-guns happened to be handy? How many communities, promising settlements, lost their opportunities for usefulness and died simply because of a lot of asinine gun-play? And gun-play—the six-gun invented it. I once asked a Montana rancher what kept his valley country (since developed) so backward. "Whisky and six-guns," he replied, "the curses of the West." I know it would be hard on the boys who write Western fiction if this point of view were accepted, but there you are.

IF ANY one gun had a dominant part in the winning of the West it probably was the .44 Winchester rifle. A poor rifle in this day of Newton's, etc., but in the '70s—*wow!* The Sioux used Winchester repeaters against Custer's outfit, with considerable result. The cavalrymen on that occasion had the single-shot carbine and six-shooters. And many a lone pioneer sent the red raiding parties home with nothing but a bunch of riderless ponies to show for their trouble, and kept on pioneering, just because he happened to have one of those .44s hanging over the door—fifteen shots to the loading.

How about it, old-timers? Which was the big medicine for the old West's needs, speaking practically, not romantically? The repeating rifle or the short-range six-gun?— —

And still another cites the Webley-Fosbery as an automatic revolver. To the list of books he gives should be added "American Small Arms," by Edward S. Farrow, late of the U. S. Army, The Bradford Co., New York, 1904.

Seattle, Washington.

In your article on firearms there is mentioned an "automatic revolver." Mr. Brown states that there is no such thing. However, the gentleman from Oregon puts him right by calling his attention to the Webley-Fosbery. I have a catalogue of the makers, Webley & Scott, Ltd., Birmingham, England, and they call it the "Webley-Fosbery Automatic Revolver." So far as I know, there is no other made, either in this country or abroad. It has a six-inch barrel, weighs two pounds ten ounces and takes a .455 Cordite cartridge. In general outline it is very much the same as the ordinary revolver excepting that on the outside of the cylinder are deep grooves or guides which have to do with the operation of the arm.

Mr. Walter Winans speaks highly of it. Captain Hugh Pollard, in his book, "The Book of the Pistol and Revolver" (Robt. M. McBride & Co., New York, 1918), says that it possesses the drawbacks of a revolver and only operates as an automatic when held rigidly, for, if fired with a slack arm it refuses to function. A good illustration of this revolver appears in the well-known book, "Pistol and Revolver Shooting," by Himmelwright (Outing Publishing Co., New York, revised edition, not the earlier edition).

Incidentally, this is an excellent work on the pistol and revolver, especially for the amateur. There are two hundred and fifteen pages and it has twenty-eight fine illustrations, or, rather, illustrations of twenty-eight arms. They show three to the page. These include most of the models of the Smith & Wessons, Colts, Webleys, also Stevens, Luger, Mauser, Remington, Adolph-Weber and Gastin Renette.

Another work on this subject is "Modern American Pistol and Revolver," by Gould. It, however, was written some years ago and describes mainly the older models.

But if you want illustrations and descriptions of all the old and curious birds in the revolver, pistol and rifle line that you ever heard of and a lot you never even dreamed of, send two-bits to F. Bannerman, New York, for his catalogue.

When you let down the bars for the gun and revolver cranks you certainly started something. Take my word for it, they have all other cranks hog-tied.—A. E. SNYDER.

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LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

We live in a time of many and mighty changes. Underneath all the changes runs one powerful, fundamental current—mankind's growing impulse toward a fuller and more real democracy and toward a brotherhood of man that will some day spread throughout the world.

There are many paths to this goal. We see the paths, but we waste time in debating which to follow, we divide and scatter ourselves over them all. For we do *not* clearly see the goal.

We want more democracy, but most of us do not clearly know what democracy is. Our idea of democracy is only general and careless. Almost none of us can reduce it to its bare fundamentals so definitely that we can apply those fundamentals as test and measure of every problem and issue, great or small, that can arise in a nation's life or in an individual's relation to that life. We do not clearly know what democracy is.

It is this ignorance of our goal that most impedes our progress toward it. The logical remedy is to get a clearer understanding, a more definite knowledge, of democracy's real nature and workings. This department is devoted to that purpose.

Democracy is not merely a machine for governing. It is a people's attitude of mind—principles and the daily, widespread, individual practising of those principles. It can not be created by a vote or a revolution; it must be a growth. The only way to stimulate a social growth is education. The particular work of this department is to help spread that education.

Strange as it may seem, such definite, fundamental education in democracy and its practical application is almost unknown. The need is so obvious and so elementary that it has been overlooked. Americans have been so careless, so selfishly busy or so absorbed in concrete issues that they have failed to examine carefully into the democracy that they boast and have even forgotten there is need of full, solid, thorough understanding.

If you believe in democracy it is your duty to make sure that you yourself have that thorough understanding and to spread it among others. This department offers you the opportunity to do both.

THE war is over. We say that "peace has come."

But the world is in such ferment as it has never known before. Nations have been born, nations have died. Boundary lines have leaped from place to place on the map. Dynasties have fallen, dynasties have been created, republics have been formed. Nations are leaguing together in new groups. Old institutions crumble, new orders arise. Revolutions have become a usual means of attaining political changes. Class glares at class, faction at faction, individuals maneuver for individual power or profit. As the war of arms dies down the war of commerce, business and industry springs into new and fiercer life. Starvation and disease stalk the earth. Poverty, bitter and widespread from the devastation of the war, drives millions to desperation.

Grief for the dead, sorrow for homes and goods vanished in destruction, despair of the maimed, bewilderment in a world that has crumbled about his head and now strives to rise again in new forms, these tear man from his roots and leave him loose and careless to the sweeping winds of change, in his blood the war habit of ends gained by violence, in his brain strange, new ideas struggling for expression, in his heart a restlessness such as he has never known before.

And we say that "peace has come"!

WE REJOICE, and rightly, for the world-war is finished and won. But that is only the first stage of the world's bitter journey begun in the Summer of 1914. No peace conference can magic the world back into its former state. Or into its former habits or attitude of mind. The avalanche is only half-way down the hill.

The world-pot has been stirred with the brutal ladle of war. The ladle has been withdrawn, but the world-pot still swirls and bubbles. That is natural, but there is something peculiar about this continued swirling. Mixed and tangled as they are, the swirls follow more and more a common direction. The ladle seems to have created a particular and strong ferment that goes on boiling of itself after the ladle has been withdrawn.

What is this mighty ferment? What is this new impulse that so drives mankind in its bitter restlessness?

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The impulse toward democracy.

"Of course," you say. "That is what we fought this war for."

Yes, but *the World War was only one crude step along the new way.*

MANKIND is not satisfied. It has turned monarchies into democracies, given to the people power once held by a few. But it is not satisfied. The avalanche is only half-way down the hill.

We have won "the war for democracy." But what is this democracy we have won? Is mankind satisfied with it? No. We do not even know just what it is. What kind of democracy *do* we want? We don't know that either.

What *is* democracy? We are not sure. But we are sure of this—we are going to find out what real democracy is and *we are going to get it!*

This, underneath all the swirling, is the great impulse that drives us. This is the avalanche. And God help the man or the institution that stands in the way!

WE ARE tasting the fruits of victory, yet they tang bitter in our mouths. The agonies of the war have made us keener to the agonies that existed before the war, the routine agonies of peace that still exist. Overthrowing autocracies has made us see more clearly those other autocracies we have so long endured without fully realizing their tyranny. Mankind is beginning to understand. We are beginning to realize that democracy is not the mere absence of monarchs. We are beginning to realize that democracy is not merely a form of government that claims to give rule by the people—and doesn't.

We have known a good while that crowned heads are not the only tyrants. For one thing, long before the war there was an ever-growing rebellion in men's breasts against the tyranny of capital. That was the easiest kind of tyranny to see. So easy that men have directed their sullen bitterness almost altogether against kings and capital, forgetting the other enemies of democracy. And now, stirred by the war, we turn still more bitterly against these two things.

BUT there are other tyrannies and autocracies and, stirred by the war's upheaval, we are beginning to see these too—the autocracies, even in what we call a democracy, of class, of race and creed, of politicians, officeholders and parties, of business, commerce and industry over other needed activities, of outworn customs and institutions. (We are even beginning to see the tyranny of graft and pull, of selfishness and greed, of any profiteering in war or in peace, by an individual at the expense of a nation, the people as a whole. And in this last we are getting very close to the heart of the whole matter.)

But meantime we are vastly disturbed and vastly mixed. We do not yet see clearly. The war has given us bad habits. Mankind has proved again that injustices can be corrected by violence; a little drunk with its success and new freedom, it slips easily into the promitive idea that violence is the best way to correct all injustices. Behold the millions of people who, freed from foreign war, have been correcting evils by the bloodshed method —sweeping and indiscriminate killing, wholesale pillage and confiscation, blind and stupid destruction of any and all institutions, good and bad alike, without regard to need or sense or right.

BRUTE force is a dangerous tool. Once loosed, it destroys, destroys, destroys, and grain and weeds alike go down before it. Sometimes there is need of it, as in the war we have just fought, yet one of the greatest lessons mankind has learned from that war is that wars are hell let loose on earth and are to be avoided by every ingenuity and device possible to the race and consonant with the advance of right. That realization is one of our greatest steps forward in race progress.

But, unfortunately, all mankind has not attained that realization. Or can not apply it. Millions see that international war is a mistaken method; but war is merely brute force carefully ordered, and millions still hail brute force, less carefully ordered, as the right tool for advancing justice, peace and happiness. Behold Russia attaining peace by bloodshed, wealth by destruction, happiness by inflicting misery.

IT DOES not follow that the ultimate object of the Bolshevists, the sincere ones, is wrong. Any more than it follows that it is right. But their methods have run into madness. They are destroying evils, but, now that the most malignant evils have been destroyed, destruction is firm in the saddle and rides down the good with the evil, itself getting ever drunker with its power.

The French Revolution advanced race progress, but, after it had advanced it, the Revolution's brute force methods shoved it part way back. It gained more "liberty, equality and fraternity," but it also formally abolished God, imposed the tyranny of making all people wear certain kinds of clothes and committed other autocratic excesses that were as profitless or retrogressive as they were ridiculous.

BUT Russia's Bolshevism is only an example, a symptom. The same impulse runs through the whole world, a world roused to the determination for a more real democracy but still dizzy and confused from the war agony. War has taught us brute-force habits—brute force got us more democracy; why not get still more democracy with still more brute force?

Call it by what name you will, it spreads like hidden fire, aflame here, smoldering there. The man who thinks this country is in no danger from it is a fool. It smolders here already. It may be delayed a year, five years, ten, twenty. But we, too, shall have to face the issue.

THE avalanche half-way down the hill is fuller democracy. There are two paths it can follow. In some countries it follows one, in others the second. The first path, which for brevity we may call Bolshevist, is that of brute force, of violent internal upheaval, revolution and blood; the second path is the path of democracy itself. Which path is it going to follow in America?

It is for us to decide. Which shall it be?

THE Bolshevist path is quicker. Why not follow it, even if it does mean more suffering by innocent as well as guilty, even if it does go often astray?

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Let us consider. First, whither do the two paths lead? In the long run, to exactly the same place. Mankind wants a fuller, more real democracy, the fullest and most real possible, and mankind is going to get it. Men are wearying of the undemocracies of even our most democratic democracies, of social systems in which equal efforts receive such unequal rewards. After thousands of years the world has fairly well outgrown the rule that the strongest arm gets the most goods; it is even beginning to outgrow the rule that the strongest brain gets the most goods. It is beginning to believe that all men are born *really* equal, be the arm stout or feeble, the brain sharp or dull. It is beginning to clamor for a social system based on such equality, for a democracy so full and just that we can not yet even define it but call it "the millenium." None of us will live to see it, but this full democracy will come, and the war and its consequences have set the majority of us to building for it more eagerly than ever before. That is what we want, Bolshevists and plain Americans alike. The same objective, but a difference of opinion as to path and method.

WHY not use quick force to attain it? Force, probably, was France's only chance at the time of the Revolution, but today France is so organized that sweeping changes are possible without violence. Force, perhaps but improbably, was necessary in Russia, but in our own country we have ready to hand peaceful machinery for attaining what ends we please. As surely as we have peacefully let it slip out of our hands into the hands of the few, just as surely can we take it back into our hands—peacefully. We don't *have* to use force, then, but is force quicker, surer?

It seems so. But it is not. For the object sought is democracy, and a revolution by brute force, however democratic it may be at the start, soon becomes *autocratic*. It means only a change of tyrants. Just as the French Revolution swept autocratic power from the hands of Louis XVI into those of Robespierre, Danton and others and then into those of Napoleon, betraying democracy back into absolute monarchy, a monarchy that nearly seized all Europe, not France alone. A second revolution was necessary. And meanwhile the world was drenched in blood and the course of democracy was checked.

IF YOU appeal to the rule of force, then force rules. Whoever controls the force becomes the autocrat—until the next man or clique wrests power from him and becomes tyrant until—the next shifting. The people at large suffer. Democracy is gone, autocracy rules.

For autocracy is autocracy, whether it wears a king's crown or a peasant's hat, a capitalist's silk headgear or the cap of a workingman. *Democracy is gone when any class or minority or individual of the people rules all the people.*

And that is the first great lesson we must learn and hold fast to.

SO, IF we Americans choose the violent Bolshevist path to save time, we are likely to lose time instead. It not only opens the door to new autocracies but it is in itself a violation of democracy. For our democracy, imperfect though it is, does provide orderly and lawful means of changing our government and social system in any way the majority please. That means *can* be used. But only by a majority. If, through corruption, the machinery does not respond readily, it can be made to do so with less effort and waste than is necessary to carry on a revolution. To use any other method of bringing about changes is to repudiate and to discard democracy and to check its progress, not further it. You can not make something white by using black paint. You can not save time by running backward. You can not attain democracy by building up new autocracies. You can not get democracy by violating it.

That is the second great lesson we Americans must learn and hold fast to.

AND there is a third great lesson: Democracy is not just a piece of machinery, a form of government, but a state of mind, an attitude and practise of a people. You can create the piece of machinery by using a bloody ax on human bodies and human institutions, but no ax can enforce the practise and state of mind that are democracy.

I HAVE talked a long time, and perhaps to many of you the danger of any violent revolution in America doesn't seem worth talking about at all. Most Americans thought there would be no European war, and, after war came, that this country would not be dragged into it. I do not say that revolution will surely raise its bloody and stupid head in our country, but I do say that it is entirely possible and that the only way to prevent it is for us to speed up the other and peaceful means for attaining what is really the same end. The avalanche for full and real democracy is half-way down the hill. There are only two paths it can follow. If we don't want it to take one path, then we must clear the other.

IS THIS department going to consist merely of talks from me? No. But first we must define a common ground and find how many of us can meet on it. Our country is full of classes and parties, each working for its own selfish ends, none of them working for the people as a whole. About the only kind of American who isn't organized is the plain, every-day, common-or-garden American who merely wants a fair deal, really believes in democracy and is willing to do something for all the people instead of just for himself alone or for the particular part of the people to which he happens to belong.

MOST of us are just this kind of plain, every-day American—laborers, doctors, wanderers, merchants, sailors, soldiers, lawyers, mechanics, rich or poor, high or low, educated or uneducated—it doesn't matter. Just Americans. And we are bound together by a common interest stronger and higher and more fundamental and lasting than binds any of the classes or parties together. We haven't realized this, and it is time we did.

For there is need of us. And need that we should stand and work together. Not for ourselves alone but for the American people. Not even for them alone, but for the real brotherhood and democracy that must some day include all mankind.

Each of us is only an atom; all of us together are a mighty force.—A. S. H.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

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Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: 1916 and 1917 complete. State price. G. DUERR, 2746 N. Judson St., Philadelphia.

WILL SELL: Mid-Sept., Mid-Oct., Mid-Nov., and Mid-Dec., 1917; also Mid-May and First July, 1918—JOE BUSTARD, 9304 Amesbury Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp at the Front, or in Hospital.

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those fighting in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent a one as possible.

PVT. E. MAY, No. 3082042, 1st Quebec Regt., Montreal, Canada.

SGT. M. E. HARRISON, 466 Aero Squadron, A. E. F., France.

PVT. JULIUS L. JOSEPH, Hdqtrs, S. O. S., A. P. O. 717, Office Chief of Chemical Welfare Service, A. E. F., France.

PVT. FRANK KOHL, Troop B, 314 Military Police, A. E. F., France.

PVT. HAROLD S. KILGORE, Co. E., 10 Engrs. A. S., S. O. S., A. E. F., France.

ROY W. CLARK, St. Helena Training Station, Camp Paul Jones, Norfolk, Va.

SPR. ELTON STONE, No. 2011865, Can. Engrs. Depot, Brockville, Ontario, Can.

PVT. WM. HARVEY, No. 851089, 3rd Canadian Batt., care of Army P. O., London.

CPL. J. D. GRANT, No. 42299182, 105 Coy., C. E. F., Wool Dorset, England.

WALTER J. HESTER, 94th Co., 24 R. Br., 162 Depot Brigade, Camp Pike, Ark.

ANDREW B. MATHEWS, U. S. S. *Monterey*, care of P. M., San Francisco, Calif.

ALAN B. TYRELL, Elec. 2-c. care of Radio, Radio Station, Bar Harbor, Maine.

PVT. JACK LINDSAY, U. S. Marine Corps., 30 Grosvenor Gardens, London, England, S. W. 1.

PVT. WM. JOHNS, Co. I, 44th U. S. Inf., Camp Lewis, Washington.

LIEUT. R. B. KILPATRICK, 329 Inf., 830 Division, A. E. F., France.

PVT. B. FORD, No. 405556 C. E. F., care of 91 Osterly Park View Rd., Hanwell, London, W. 7.

O. F. WILSON, No. 340533, B. Batt., C. R. A., Camp Witly, Surrey, England.

HARRY N. PHILLIPS, 115 Field Hospital, 104 Sanitary Training, A. P. O. 765, A. E. F.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and interchangeable in this country for American stamps.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 33d Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
WILLIAM BROCKWAY, Oriental Park, Marianao, Cuba. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, 5036 Utica St., Denver, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for

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sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, 907 Sterling Place, Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, languages, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports: hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie, the former editor of this section, is now in France. His section is accordingly in abeyance until we can find a suitable successor.)

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

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The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

The Dutch East Indies

NOTHING talks as loud as money, especially in the tropics. The hotter the climate gets, the nicer it is to be a dollar:

Question:—"I am writing you for information in regard to the Dutch East Indies; *i. e.*, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, and Celebes, as I contemplate taking a trip there this Summer.

"I have read all the available books in our Public Library, but they are from ten to twenty years old, so do not think conditions now can be anywhere nearly the same as they were then.

"Will you please give me what information you can in regard to the following:

"1—Fare, and best route to take. Would like some idea as to both first and second class rates as I know several S. S. lines only allow the white race to travel first-class while second and third class are for Asiatics only.

"2—Present condition of the country, cost of living, rents, etc.

"3—Chances for business with, say a capital of less than a thousand dollars.

"4—Employment as expert accountant, or in railroad or steamship lines. I understand there has been considerable railroad work in Java. Is employment of any kind easily secured or not?

"5—Kind of clothing necessary, and average temperature.

"6—Can one take a rifle and shotgun at the present time out of the U. S. A.? If so what kind would you recommend?

"7—Can one procure ammunition there or would it be necessary to take that also?

"8—Would one be liable to secure a position on one of the large plantations as overseer, or timekeeper?

"Thank you in advance for any information you may be able to send me. I would ask that you do not publish my name if the letter is published in *Adventure*."

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—Your letter has taken a long time in reaching me. I hope that the information I can give you will not be too late to be of use to you.

As you say, all the available books on the Malay Archipelago seem to be at least ten years old. And at that, quite the best are written in German or Dutch.

I can't give you the exact present-time fare. Before the war it would have cost you about two

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hundred dollars to get to Singapore, from which port you would, of course, make local arrangements. Steamers sailing from Singapore touch at all the possible places in Borneo and the Dutch East Indies. Local fares are very cheap.

I have never heard of any line which would not permit a white man to travel second-class. In fact, I don't know of any restriction against traveling third-class—that is, what they call "deck passage," for which they don't feed you; you have to carry your own grub. But that is possible only for natives of the country. I have traveled second-class many a time on all sorts of Oriental lines, and my only kick has been against the other hoboes who have been doing the same thing. Food and accommodation have been very decent.

I don't believe anybody can tell you much about present conditions of any country, or about chances of business at present or in the future. Under pre-war conditions a single man could live on about a hundred dollars a month with comfort.

I have not heard of any restriction against taking sporting arms out of the U. S. A. As to kind, you will find, for shotguns, the twelve gage a standard all over the Far East. And you will be able to get any standard American or British rifle ammunition at Singapore.

Employment. This is a big and very much vexed question which I am often asked to answer. It is very difficult to answer satisfactorily. Of course, there are many large firms who employ expert accountants and overseers and timekeepers. But I must warn you that most of the positions worth having are filled by the immediate relatives and friends of the firms in question.

It is mighty difficult for a stranger to go out and step into a job right away. If he does so, it is a matter of luck entirely, and it would be foolish in the extreme for any man to go out looking for employment unless he had money enough to carry him along for at least four or five months.

A capital of less than a thousand dollars would not be enough to establish you in any sort of business which a white could conduct. Small businesses are carried on by natives. White men belong in the big firms.

However, you could do nothing before you went to see for yourself, and, as I have said, I wouldn't advise anybody to go who could not carry himself for a few months while he looked around.

Sea Chanties

THE subjoined correspondence will stir up renewed interest in a dying branch of literature, or I miss my guess. Come on, you old shellbacks, go back in your minds for remembrances of old-time sea-songs, and we'll print all we dare to:

Question:—"Noting the Service Bureau of Information in *Adventure*, there are several questions I would like to ask concerning sailor songs that were sung in the 70's that I have forgotten.

"As the old-time chanty is out of date today and few are published, possibly you may have something stowed away that might be brought to light again.

"If you can add to, or correct the following, please do so:

THE NORTH POLE FOR TO SEE
(*Walk-away Chanty.*)

"'Tis a hundred years,' said the bo'sun bold, 'since I was a boy at sea.
'Tis a hundred years, so I've been told, and that's the truth,' said he.
'And that's the truth,' said he.

'We sailed away from Wilford Bay the North Pole for to see:
And we got there too without much ado, and that's the truth,' said he.
'And that's the truth,' said he.

* * * * * * * *

"'So, gentlemen all, if you should sail the North Pole for to see,
You've only got to sail at the tail of a whale, and that's the truth,'" said he.
"'And that's the truth,' said he.

BLUE MOUNTAINS OF TENNESSEE
(*Hoisting Chanty, Barbados, W. I.*)

"Oh, I love the Blue Mountains, the Blue Mountains of Tennessee.
I love the Blue Mountains, Blue Mountains of Tennessee.
In eighteen hundred and sixty-three,
(Oh, you Tennessee!)
That's where my massa set me free,
"I'm bound for Tennessee.

"Thanking you, I am, yours very truly."—F. P. HARLOW, Seattle, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Brintnall:—You will find articles on sailor's chanties in the following magazines:
Independent, July, 1909.
Harper's, January, 1903.
Everybody's, August, 1915.
The English poet, Masefield, has published a book, "A Sailor's Garland," in which he has gathered together a large number of sailor's songs. He was at one time a sailor himself.

Reply, by Mr. Harlow:—"Thank you very kindly for the interest manifested in answering my inquiry of recent date.

"I am the youngest of four brothers, all having seen deep-water service. For some time a brother in Portland, Ore., and myself have been gathering all the chanties we could, trying to get the original words as much as possible, but they are 'hull down' and fast disappearing."

Further Answer, by Mr. Brintnall:—I would like to add to the information I gave you on chanties.

Chanty-singing is being taught in the nautical schools of the East. The United States Shipping Board has appointed an official chanty instructor, Stanton H. King, of Boston. He is an old salt himself; got his experience in deep water ships nearly forty years ago.

Britain's African Sub-Kingdom

HERE'S just a side-light on the vastness and complexity, as well as the just and tolerant rule, of our Britannic sister's mighty Empire. Britain rules the waves—

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and doesn't overlook many bets on land either:

Question:—"I have read somewhere of an African Kingdom, the name of which I can not remember, under the rule of England. Can you tell me where it is, also the customs of the people, mode of living, chief things raised, etc.? Can you tell me something of the Royal family? Does the king really rule, or are they governed by England as a colony? I wish I could remember the name or location, but both have slipped my mind; perhaps you can refer me to some book about it also.

"Please do not publish my name."—East Alburgh, Vt.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—England governs many dependencies and protectorates in Africa that have native rulers, sultans, emirs, kings. These countries cover a wide area and all kinds of climate. Generally speaking, England polices these countries, keeps a small force of native troops, forbids slaving, gun-running, interference with trade, cannibalism and tribal fighting; but if the native ruler is intelligent and well-behaved they leave him pretty much alone and leave the blacks to their own laws, so long as those laws do not conflict with the general policy of civilizing the countries.

Recently England has assumed overlordship over the tribes of the Pagan Belt and is opening up the country to traders and miners. Officers called Residents are placed near the local kings and have jurisdiction over such matters as tribal disputes, murders of traders, religious wars and such.

It is impossible to answer "customs of people and modes of living, etc.," as that is too large an order for a letter. Read Stanley's "Dark Continent" and other books on Africa and you will see that the subject is almost inexhaustible.

New Zealand, the Island Paradise

THE heading says it all. If you don't believe it, write Mr. Mills, and if he can't convince you the country will, says he in the following letter:

Question:—"What kind of climate has New Zealand? Are there any modern industries there? Is there any need for a first-class auto mechanic and what chance is there for building up a good business in that line?"—EMMETT P. FINNEGAN, Collinston, La.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:— Are there any modern industries in New Zealand? My dear man, what sort of conception have you of this Greater Britain of the South? Why, even the aborigines (the Maoris) drive their motor-cars and send their butter and cheese and wool to the English markets. New Zealand has sent 100,000 first-class fighting men to the several fronts—Gallipoli, Sinai, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Macedonia, and Flanders, besides having a battle-ship (the *New Zealand*) in the North Sea, and something like 100 aviators. We have only a million population, but we are right up to date—every modern convenience and implement in our homes and on our farms.

I'm boasting? Not on your life. I'm boosting! Climate! Well, now, you just get me going some more. It is the very best in the world. Our earth never gets frozen in the worst of out-of-season Winters. Snow in our towns and cities is a curiosity. There are extremes in neither Summer nor Winter. We have no heating furnaces in any of our homes, and very rarely over the greater portion of the two islands is the water frozen in the pipes. Perhaps I can best emphasize the equableness of our climate by saying that the cattle are out in the open all the year round, and not even in the Winter season (from June to August) are all the cows rugged.

There are motor-cars galore throughout our Dominion, and garages in every village almost. You would find plenty to occupy your talents as an auto mechanic, but if you aspire to running a business of your own, and you are exempt from war service, then the very best thing for you to do is to bring over some agencies and some of the very latest models of cars.

The Mississippi Levee Guards

WHAT a wonderful lot of little-known, adventurous jobs there are knocking around in the country if one only sets about looking for them:

Question:—"I would like to ask you a few questions about the Mississippi River levee guards.

"Are they employed through the Government Civil Service examinations, or are they employed by the States in which they operate?

"What is their duty? Are they each assigned to guard a certain part of the levee? Do they have telephone connections with each other and headquarters, if indeed they have central headquarters."—A. H. CLARK, Coldwater, Miss.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—The levee guards are employed through the local levee boards, for service in patrol work. Guarding in the low-water months, to prevent trespass, fencing, damage, etc., is under Government management, I believe. I do not know what arrangement is made between the local and national levee boards.

If you will write to your local levee board, covering Upper Mississippi (State), known as Upper Yazoo District, the secretary will send you information. You can learn from Coldwater Postmaster, I think, the address of the local board, and a letter to it will give you instructions how to get the guard word to do.

A letter to U. S. Engineer Office, Memphis, Tennessee, will bring you the information you ask for about employment of guards for the Government levee work in Upper Yazoo district. This engineer office controls the Government work on your water-front, along De Soto and Tunica County. U. S. guards would be employed through that office, regular guards probably under Civil Service, but special and emergency guards by appointment of local engineer in charge.

They have regular beats between stations; they look for cattle and other trespassing, washes by rain-storms, weed-growth, places that need resodding, illegal fencing and occupation, roadway damage, and in fact preserve and make minor repairs to the levee. They must make reports, and in high water are in signal connection or telephone communication with engineers in command, regular guards being overseers and in charge, I believe, or volunteer and special guards.

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Chances in Haiti

HAITI is a wonderful country, and its people are a wonderful people. Let's admire them—from a distance. It's safer:

Question:—"As an ardent reader of *Adventure* magazine I take the liberty of asking for some information as to chance for myself and three other young men on the Island of Haiti.

"What openings are there for clerks and cashiers on the island?

"What other opportunities are there for young men with red blood in their veins?

"Is there any chance of junior engineers connecting with a local firm and being shipped to the island? What is the climate?

"Will you let me have all the information in your possession on this subject."—TOM W. BENT, Newark, New Jersey.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—Although the island republic of Haiti is tremendously rich in soil and full of practically undeveloped mineral wealth, I am always obliged to give an opinion against an American going there for settlement. The country is a negro paradise; the negroes run their own little nation to suit themselves; they are, of course, lords in their own domain; naturally the white man has to a great extent to play a similar part there to that played by the colored man here.

I do not like, therefore, to advise anybody to decide on Haiti as a ground for exploitation. A Frenchman is always welcome; the language is French; Haitians send their children to France for education; but I think other white races are at a disadvantage.

My opinions being what they are, I can only suggest that you ask Mr. Francisco J. Yanes, Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., for his views. He will tell you exactly how you would stand, if you explain precisely what you can do.

Personally I think you would do much better in Porto Rico, or the newly acquired Virgin Islands, for which the Department of Insular Affairs, Washington, will give you up-to-date data on requirements. You will understand that the war has changed almost every condition.

A Letter from Mr. Young

READ a letter from Mr. Young, Editor of Ask Adventure's Section Seventeen, that may explain some things, as well as bring a ray of sunshine to many inquirers:

84 Court Street, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

The above is my permanent address. Please change it in the Ask Adventure. Nitro, West Virginia, proved to be a poor place to get mail forwarded from due to the unsettled conditions incident to a big construction camp and I failed to receive a great many questions. I found this out when I dropped in to see Mr. Hoffman yesterday.

I will try to get the postmaster at Nitro lined up so that I will receive current questions until the new address is printed. I either have answered or will answer all questions received by me. I have a stack of them right in front of me and will start on them to-day. In the future I will knock them out the same day they are received. No more jobs of work for me until next Summer, so I will have plenty of time.

Will you please insert a few lines to the effect that although my address was Nitro, West Virginia, I was engaged by the War Department expediting material to that point and was changing towns almost daily for several months at a time? Also invite those who have not received a reply from me to try me now.—EDGAR YOUNG.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

LORNTZEN, CHRIS, and LEWIS, BENNY. Last heard of in Colorado, but were soon to leave for Canada. Any information as to their whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address CPL. R. E. ETHERIDGE, care of *Adventure.*

BAKER, R. W. Your letter received. I am deeply sorry over news. You have all my sympathy. No matter what happens you can depend on me. Have had no word from R. We are all well. Write often and tell me where to address you.—M.

LOVE, MRS. MARIE, and daughters VIOLET and DAISY. Last heard of in Bisbee, Ariz., about 1908. Address wanted as beneficiaries in war risk insurance. Any information regarding the above names will be thankfully received.—Address MR. RELKCUB, care of *Adventure.*

McMURRY, MRS. (maiden name, LORENE BELL BEAUMIER). Last heard of in Cambleford, Ont., or Cincinnati, Ohio. Any information concerning her will be appreciated.—Address A. H. BEAUMIER, 622 Cooper St., Watertown, N. Y.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

WILSON, CLARENCE. In 1913 living at 810 N. Delaware St., Indianapolis, Ind. Employed at the Pittman Meyers Medical Co., 111 Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind. Any information concerning him will be appreciated.—Address J. P. FOREMAN, Box 335, Piqua, Ohio.

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CARLSON, NELS. (Brother). Age 57. Last heard from about nine years ago near Arlington, Oregon. Farming. Supposed to have gone to Alberta, Canada. Has been in Alaska twice—Dutch Harbor and Cape Nome. Lived in California; I think in Riverside County. Worked in the sugar refineries. Was in the Thunder Mountain gold excitement in Idaho, in 1903. Had a partner of many years named Charles Benson. Any information as to his whereabouts will be gratefully received.—Address CALEB CARLSON, 2617 Turner St. Vancouver, B. C., Canada.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

HUGHES, WM. P. Commonly called the "Beautiful Beast" in Mexico, write to his old adventure pal.—Address JACK York, Naval Training Camp, Newport, R. I.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First-January or Mid-January issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

ANDERSON, WILLIAM; Brockman, C. A.; Coxter, Charles B.; Dempsey, Raymond S.; Fisher, Elmer; Foose, James O.; Harrison, William; Herrod, William; Hunter, Clifford Todd; Inge, Jim; Laing, Harry; Langford, George Washington; Lynch, Miss Barbara; Meonis, Wm. J.; Reichmeier, John C.; Robbe, Perry; Sayers, Robert E.; Silk, William J.; Spellit, L.; Williams, Burton Albert.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, Ruth Gilfillan, Leo Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; Wu Tien Tang; O. B. Franklin; Cole Williams.

THE following names have been inquired for within the past two years. The name of the inquirer can be obtained from this magazine

ALLEN, WILLIAM C.; Ackley, John A.; Acken, B. C. (Barney); Adams, "Jeff"; Aldrick, R. B.; Ali Mfg. Co.; Allison, Bruce C.; Albritton, Tom and Bessie; Adams, two aunts and uncle; Anderson, "Mooney," and "Ravenham"; Andrews, Frank Lee; Arnold, Edward A.; Armstrong, Thomas; Anderson, Charles Michell; Anderson, Nelson Miles; Anderson, Alex; Arbuckle, Margaret; Anderson, John Emil; Avery, Gus; Baird, from Glasgow, Scotland; Barber, Robert Willis; Bargery, William; Basker, Lewis; Baust, Henry; Bates, A. L.; Baumier, Austin; Bedingfield, "Pink";Beckett, Hugh; Beal,George Henry; Bechtel,George; Bell, John Watson: Bevel, Wiley R.; Bengthsson, Alfred; Berry, Nellie; Bloom, Paul or "The White Dutchman;" Bittel, George; Blakemore, C. Homer; Bliss, Archibald, John; Bowles, Mrs. Fred; Botts, Mrs.; Bordon, Irene; Boulton, George W.; Brackman, Gus; Branock, Ray; Branscombe, Earl; Brigman, B. F.; Brandel, Jack; Bromley, Arthur; Brown, Berry; Brownhill, Timothy and William; Bruffey, Elmer; Burns, Wm.; Butts, Chester, H.; Burns, Ada; Campbell, Webb.; Caldwell, Earl; Callen, Philo; Campbell, Arthur; Campbell, Kennard; Carroll, James W.; Castle, Edward Moses; Carmichael, Archibald; Cease, Lewis. Clancy or Clancey, Timothy; Clymer, Chas. A.; Chaplin, Frederick L.; Challa, Theodore Menage; Clarke, Harry; Cherrington, Don K.; Chamberlain, Carl D.; Cilch; Chantles, Memer de; Chipman ——; Chafin, W. R. and Roderic Morrough; Collins, Jim and Michael; Cook, Luther; Cole, Lubin, Merton; Connors, John or Ed.; Coyle, Arthur; Connolly, Charles; Coresuell, Athol G.; Conwell, John A.; Coolidge, Frank Townley; Cox, Sherman W.; Couth, Mrs. Mary; Copp, Ed; Cullen; Curtis, George; Crossley, John; Curran, Joe; Cummings, Harold R.; Crammer, John; Crisp, Edward; Crofft, Marie Gonzalez; Cranston, Arthur W.; Cross, Horace Keith; Curtiss, Marion; Crouse, Samuel Blake; Cunningham, James, Maggie, Mary and John; Darling, Chas. H.; Darlington, Chas. H.; Daniel, John B.; Dankel, Henry; Dattle, Arthur; De Lano, Frank M.; DeVeroy, Leslie; Devers, L. W.; Diliert, Howard; Dickeson, Arthur D.; Dishon, Birt; Diggs, John W.; Dickerson, Tommie; Douglas, L. D.; Douglas, James R.; Dove, Emery; Drummond J. A.; Donald, William James and John Henry; Doolittle, J. C.; Dunn, Mark M. Sr. and Mark M. Jr.; Dunn, J. G.; Dupree, Alex; Dunkerley, Fred; Egan, Edward and Edward Kavanagh; Eastman, Harvey; Edwards, John H.; Edwards, Samuel; Ellis, Lloyd W.; Estelle, Ed. J.; Evans, Wille; Farnsley, Allie A.; Fairchild, John; Fish, Eber; Flanigan, Mr. or Mrs.; Flynn, Maurice J.; Flanagan, George; Fisher "Bud"; Fisher, Fred L.; Flint, Harry: Fisher, William Wright; Fillingham, Fred L.; Foote, Alden Willert and Arthur Longworth; Fodder, "Fat"; Footsie, Usher; Ford, Ed. W.; Foster, Tom; Foster, Dixon or Bert; Frankie, "Bottles"; Fredericks, Frank; Fuller, WalterWilliams;

GARRISON, CHAS.; Gardner, Henry; Gambrall, Theodore Chas; Gainty, John; Gibson, Arthur E.; Gearhart, Ray; Gilmore, Edw. E.; Gende, Eugenio; Gilday, John E.; Clover, Martin; Glanman, Al.; Gomerley, Harry J.; Goodacre, Leon; Goodwill, Clifton C.; Golden, Jimmie; Gowen, Floyd E.; Green, Glenn S.; Greathouse, John T.; Granville, Richard; Griffin, Barry; Gruman, Herschell, J.; Griffin, Tom; Gross, Louis: Gullette, Willis; Guttroff, Herman Martin; Hall, J. Harold; Hager, Robert; Hammond, Edward; Hamilton, Mildred-Frances; Hammer, Charles; Hainze, Eugene; Haley, Robt. E. Lee; Hammack, (Count) B. H.; Halloran, "Tom"; Harris, George; Harris, James T.; Harbin, Hayden; Hargett, Fred L.; Harmon, H. E.; Hart, Albion W.; Harris, Geo.; Harper, Lafayette; Hart, Frank J.: Hassler, Charles; Hayne, Emil; Heckert, Harry H.; Heinze or Haines; Helmick, Roy J.; Heck, "Hell-Roaring;" Henderson, Al.; Henderson, Mrs. Edith Houston; Hickman, George D.; Hill, R. E.; Hipple, Clyde; Hicky; Hilliard, Leon; Hilgenhorst, John; Hoffman, A. C.; Hoffman, Albert F.; Hoffman, A. F.; Hoffman, August F.; Hoffman, Frank L.; Hogan, John; Holl (Bob) Robert; Howley, Jim; Honey, J. T.; Howard, Will or Jack; Hottenstein, George Edward; Hopkins, Horace; Honifer, Gus; Hunt, Arthur; Hutton, William K.; Hyer,Joe; Hugill, Ashton C. and Hugo Van Alstyn; Jaffeman, Noelin; Jackson, Charles; Jewell, John H.; Jennings, Andrew; Jones, Charles Augustus; Jolliffe, Arthur; Jones, Harry Bainton; Jones, R. C.; Johnson, (Standfast) J. C.; Johnson, Harry C.; Kavanagh, Edward and Edward Egan; Karoko, Peter; Keene, John; Kellogg, Kenneth; Keene, Carl Howard: Kelly, Sergeant M.; Kelly, R. E.; Key, Thos. W.; King, Jim; King, Rodrick Barlo; King, Vance Herald; King, Frank M.; Kilder, Irwin; Kline, Paul A.; Kleinle, Erving Louis; Kopp, Elmer, V.; Kratz, Herman A.; Krause, Charles; Lawver, I. H.; Lackey, Phoenix A.; Landells, Gavin or Guy; Larsen, Lawrence; Lacy, James E.; La Barche, P.; Laski, Charles or Alexander; Lee, Leeland and Bennet; Lessnaw, Joe; Lewis, Clayton, J.; Liberati, Eugene; Lindsay, Alfred; Lovell, Jack; Lindholm, Victor A.; Lindegren, Miss Estell and Mr. Enrest; Loftis, Edward Marshall; Lough, Lyle; Loveday, Fr.; Love, Robert; Lyons, Buddy; Lynch, Miss Barbara; Lucas, Jo; Mac, G. F. R.; McAlvey, Maggie, William and John; McAndrews, Don; McCarthy, J. J.; McCord, John; McCorry, Guy Lawrence and Guerdon; McDaniel, George; McDonald, Geo. A.; McEnaney, Philip J.; McGovern, John; McGregor, Stuart; McInnes, Frank J.; McKay, Florence; McKenna; McLanahan, Mrs. Caroline; McNaulty, Francis; McNellis, (William White); MacVicar, J. F.; Maiden, Wilson F.; Mackie, Jacob, O.; MacConnell, Talbert; Major, A. S.; MacDougall, Dougal; Magnus, Alf; Mcgwon, Mackie; Manley, Clifford E.; Mauk, Stanley M.; Maxiam, Marcotte; Martin, Florence; Marshall, Charles N.; Martin, Charles; Marrone, Vito; Merrill, Russell; Menk, William; Miller, "Virgy"; Miller, Thomas Lion; Miller, William Gustaf; Millenhauer, Percy C.; Mirovoye, John; Montross, Samuel; Montgomery, Samuel B; Moehrig, Fritz; Mohoney, Ed.: Montgomery, Samuel; Moore, Mrs. Mae or Mae Addison; Morey, Sylvester; Moore, Robert H.; Morrison, Karl C.; Moomaw, Arthur and Eugene; Morgan, George F.; Mullen, David W.; Murph, "Kid" Frank; Murray, "Edith" Sydney; Nesbit, Henry; Neuton, Jesse O.; Nelson, Earl; Nelson, Eric; Nelson, Benjamin Earl; Nickerson, Joseph; Niles, John Oches; Noack, Herbert; Nuzum, John.

OLSON, OLE; Olson, John; O'Hare, Rose; Offer, George William; O'Brien, James D.; O'Connor, Frank; Osborn, Lester E.; Palmer, A. M. Jr., Paschall, Hula; Parker; Page, Donald W.; Payne, W. J.; Park, John P.; Peterson, Earl Leslie; Pelton, Fred; Pendergrass, C. F.; Pollock, G. A.; Phillips, Wm. L.; Poole, Arthur; Pollen, John C. B.; Poag, James; Pool, E. M.; Pierce, Leighton; Preston, Bud; Pringle, John A.; Price, George E.; Raymond, George H.; "Reckless"; "Reckless Billy"; Reed, William; Reid, Blair McD.: Rand, Ferris C.; Ramsey, Fitch W.; Reed, H. Bill; Reiche, Carl; Raymond, W. L.; Rembe, Edward A.; Regener, Herman; Rasner, John; Rapideau, John; Redding, Robt. C.; Riley, A. F.; Rigney, Anna; Robinson, Boyd; Robinson, Benjamin; Roberts, Charles A.; Roan, Texas; Robinson, James and Edward; Rogers, George John; Romandovski, Ellis; Rowan, A. S.; Rogers, Nelson Miles; Rogers, Athure; Ross, David H.; Rogerson, Wm. L. Rundle, Edgar; Russell, H.S.; Russell, John Mac T.;Ryan, William; Ryan, Andrew; Rutstein, Joe; Ruble, Ralph E.; Sargent, Richard Ingalls; Sammons, Wm. H.; Saaranen, Julius; Sands, Clifford W.; Saltman, William; Sagota, Nellie, Annie and Minnie; Schafer, Jacob; Schoenfeld, Ed. O.; Sells, William M. Seeley, Edward,"Shepherd, "Jack"; Sheldon, Wm. X.; Sheridan, Martin A.; Shannon, William; Shannon James; Sharrock, Joseph P.; Sherman, Colonel Ellsworth; Shaffer, E. T.; Sloane, Howard K.; Signal, Clarence J.; Siller, Walter; Slavin, Corp. J. Dallas; Sluder, Charlie; Sibley, ohn Rodney; Smith; Smith, Geo. L; Smith, Ruth B.;

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Smith, John; Smith, Joseph Burton; Smith, James; Smith, George; Solar, William T.; Spurling, Andrew B.; Stanley, Jack; Stanton, Henry A.; Stapleton, Bob; Starks, William N.; Stebbins, Charles; Stephenson, B.; Stettler, Lloyd; Stevenson, Alexander M.; Stevens, Wrene Geurea; Stewart, Ben; Stillings, George E.; Stroman, Edwin F.; Stuart, Frank Wm.; Stinson, William; Swain, Fred; Swanander, Gust and Pete; Sullivan, Eric; Sullivan, John; Talmadge, George W. and Ruben W.; Tallman, Henry Merritt; Tannehill, Edward DeWitt; Talbot, Allan Wheeler; Talmadge, Henry Arthur; Tarrants, Luther and Wm. Benjamin; Terrusse, L. S.; Teddy, (E. E. G.); "Texas"; Thurston, Frank A.; Thayer, Louis Merton; Thorpe, Val.; Thornton, "Vic"; Tinsley, Thos. Russell; Timpton, Clyde; Tompkins; Robert A. "Tex"; Tobisen, Charles J.; Todd, Theodore W., Tyler, George; Tuggle, Will S.; Uptegrove, Elmer; Ussher, Lionel Neville; Van Horne, Walter W.; Vander Horst, Fritz; Val; Vinc, Peter; Vinson, Edward; Vreeland; Vance, Thad; Van Sickle, W. D.; Walbert, Morris; Wallace, Oliver R.; Walker, Hugh Victor; Wade, Robert Lee; Waldner, George; Walker, William; Walling, Lew; Watson, E. E.; Wargo, Joe; Watkins, O. V.; Warren, Harry O.; Watts, Earl L. Brother; Washbroad, Tommy or Jo.; Ward, W. N.; Weaver, Joseph C.; Weber, Fred; Weil, Gustav; Welch, Douglas; White, Carl; White, John S.; Westcott, George; West, Rolla; Mrs. West; Westfall, Clarence V.; Williams, Lewis or Bill; Williams, (Santiago Bill); Wilson, Lewis E.; Wilbur, Walter; Wilhelm, George Washington; Williams, Covert P.; Whitlatch, James Monroe; Whitmer, William and Orlando; White, John S.; Willis, Parker or Parker, Willis; Whitlock, George W.; Wilson, Samuel William; White, P. I.; White, James Frederick; White, John S.; Wiley, Thomas W.; Willard, Thomas Manley; Winnie, Leon Loudon; Winston, Ernst; Witter, L. P., Lula A., Lillian M.; Williams, Geo. W.; Wood, Basil; Woodford, William; Wright, Granville; Yeager, Neva M.: Yeusan, Alfred; Young, A. C.; Young, William McKinley; Youker, Philip Luther; Zun, Edw. "Blondy"; Zachon, John; Zabransky, William.

MISCELLANEOUS: MacBournie, Ernest, Aubrey, Eddie, Gordon Frank and Hattie; Boys of the 97th Battalion, C. E. F., American Legion. Also boys of the 16th Platoon, D. Co.; Parties who participated in expedition to Tiburon Island about eighteen months ago. Any one knowing the whereabouts of my step-sister. Daughter of William Stewart and full brother to John Stewart; Korns, Paul, Sgt. Shields, Ben. Bormer, Henry Pullman; Mrs. —— maiden name Wallace; "English," where are you now? Survivors of Co. H. 6th Regiment of Infantry, California Volunteers, War of the Rebellion; Boys of Co. T., P. S. of T.; H. E. F.; Any of the Boys that were to sail with the Adventure Expedition From New York on the last of Sept. or the first of Oct.; Honduras expedition of 1888. Want men who took part in it; Boys of Co. T., P. S. of T.; Gutteridge "Bo"—Dennie Leary, Pete; "Batt" Strand and "Scratch"; Howard Moody; Fred Johnson, Harpoole and Mechanic. Fred Yeager; Freemen, H. Wynne, Hallette, Mr. Bennett, Students of Chesterfield School North Vancowen, B. C.; H. W. H.; S. Ray T.; Shato, Lawrence; Houghton, Thurston; Dewey, Frank; Seaton, Otto; Clark, Corky; Benny, Benard; Preston; Mr. McDonald, Chief Engineer, or any of the engine room gang of tank steamer *Montana;* Dodson, Claude E., Miller, Bird; Boyd, or any of the other boys I chummed with in Santa Fé; American Legion (of Canadian Expeditionary Force) Boys attention. Boys of the 213th Batt. Overseas Batt. C. E. F. Also boys of A. Co or Bugle or Drum Corps of Camp Borden; Sergeant Rome and Corporal Carroll; Ingelow, Crump, Empey, Thurston Nowell, Alexander Harrifield, Cassier; Brewer, Buchner, "Lizzie" Prouty, "Pop" Caspers, Clarke and numerous others of the Old "Quarantine" squad. Egan, Edward and Kavanagh, Edward—on U. S. S. *Des Moines* in 1909-10.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-FEBRUARY ADVENTURE

The Mid-February Number, in your hands on January 18th, will bring you the following eight live out-of-doors stories, besides the two mentioned in the ad on page 2:

THAT WOMAN — ***By Hapsburg Liebe***

A tale of the Tennessee mountains and the spirit they breed in the men who live in their shadows.

DOS HERMANOS — ***By Robert Palfrey Utter***

Central America: the story of how two patriotic citizens became martyrs for their cause.

LAST MAN OUT — ***By Jack Bechdolt***

'Way underground this tale takes you, in the tunnel under the lake, with the water trickling in.

LAW AND ORDER — ***By Gordon Young***

A story of the early days of San Francisco—and some of the characters who laid the foundation for the city of to-day.

THE INVALID — ***By W. A. Macdonald***

When *Joe Bedell* kills the nephew of old *John Cummins* he swears to come back and finish the job later on.

THE DIVERSION OF A MONOGRAPHIC PROFESSOR — ***By Raymond S. Spears***

Beautiful sunsets, rock formations, the wonders of nature are some of his diversions—but there are others.

THE DEVIL TAKES CARE OF HIS OWN — ***By Roy P. Churchill***

Being the reason why a bluejacket on a U. S. man-o'-war takes to piloting a street-car.

FOR THE PARSON OF PARADISE — ***By W. C. Tuttle***

In which Paradise suffers a dose of drama, administered by an unrecognized Booth, assisted by home talent.

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More than 90% of human illness has its origin in the intestinal canal—in constipation; and, in advanced years, constipation is especially dangerous. A booklet on this subject, based on the best medical opinion the world over, has been prepared especially for elderly people. It is called "As the Shadows Lengthen," and will be mailed you free on request.

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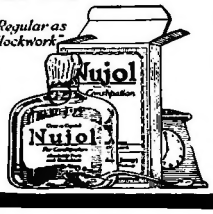

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COLGATE'S

"HANDY GRIP"

SHAVING STICK

*Mr. Jones writes a letter

—and his communication is interesting to every man who shaves himself—and wishes comfort in so doing.

"My children chanced to give me a stick of your shaving soap," says Mr. Jones. If you do not have one given you—give yourself a "Handy Grip."

"In the directions was an admonition not to rub. I thought this extremely silly," says Mr. Jones. But he found true the original Colgate phrase used since 1897—"*needs no mussy rubbing in with the fingers.*".

"I am, from now on, a firm champion of Colgate's Shaving Stick. It beats anything I have ever used," says Mr. Jones. You will think so after you have tried Colgate's "Handy Grip."

New York, April 6, 1918.

Colgate & Co., New York City.

Gentlemen:

Some months ago my children chanced to give me a stick of your shaving soap, and I am writing to you to tell you what a delight shaving now is with it, instead of the nightmare I formerly experienced whenever I shaved. The lather is wonderful, smooth as velvet, leaves the skin without any irritation, and in short, your shaving stick is ideal for the purpose.

In the directions that came with the shaving stick was an admonition not to rub the beard with the hand after applying the lather. I thought this extremely silly, but on trying it I found that your experts had solved another important element in successful shaving and I shall never again do anything but follow the advice given. The brush, applying the lather with the proper degree of moisture in it, is sufficient. The new method is vastly superior to the old.

I am, from now on, a firm champion of Colgate's Shaving Stick. It beats anything I have ever used, and I've been shaving myself for 35 years.

None of your agents have solicited this testimonial from me, but I send it merely as a deserved recognition of the makers of the best shaving soap in the world.

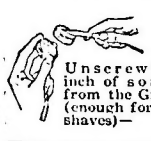
Very truly yours,

(Signed) EDWIN J. JONES*

**Mr. Jones is Associate Editor of The Financial World.*

The "HANDY GRIP" is the thrifty Shaving Stick. It saves you 50 shaves below the "Waste Line," and more: you can buy a Refill Stick for the original me Grip.

A DOUBLE ECONOMY WITH COLGATE'S



Unscrew ½ inch of soap from the Grip (enough for 60 shaves)—

and press it, wet, to a new Stick. It adheres, to be *all* used.

And the Refill Stick costs less than the complete Grip, and *screws* in